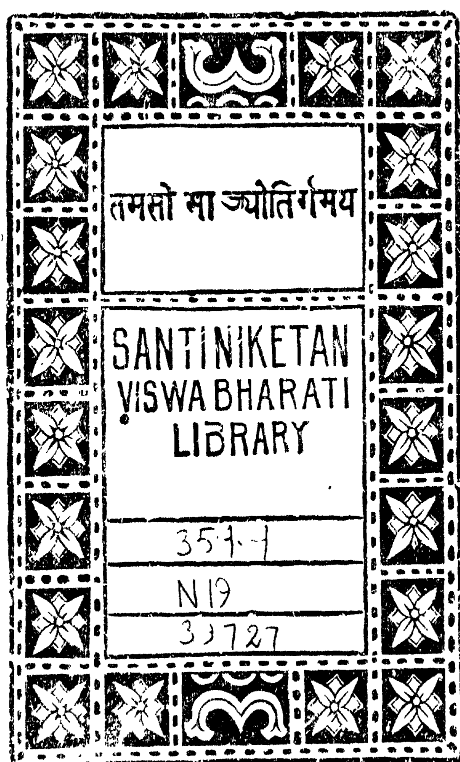


SOME BENGAL VILLAGES

SOME BENGAL VILLAGES

AN ECONOMIC SURVEY

EDITED BY

N. C. BHATTACHARYYA, M.A., B.L.

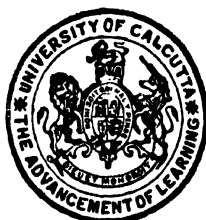
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, SCOTTISH CHURCH COLLEGE, CALCUTTA; AND LECTURER, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

AND

L. A. NATESAN, M.A., B.L.

PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL ECONOMY AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY SCOTTISH CHURCH COLLEGE, CALCUTTA

With a Foreword by SIR DANIEL HAMILTON, KT.



PUBLISHED BY THE

UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

1932

PRINTED BY BHUPENDRALAL BANERJEE
AT THE CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY PRESS, SENATE HOUSE, CALCUTTA.

Reg. No 500B—December, 1932—E.

DEDICATED

TO

REV. W. S. URQUHART, M.A., D.LITT.

PRINCIPAL, SCOTTISH CHURCH COLLEGE, CALCUTTA

AND

VICE-CHANCELLOR, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

AS A TOKEN OF OUR RESPECT FOR

HIS ABIDING INTEREST IN THE

ADVANCEMENT OF LEARNING AND THE

CAUSE OF EDUCATION IN BENGAL

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

I am inclined to agree with Mr. Moreland, in the quotation from the Report of the Royal Agricultural Commission given at the end of Professor Natesan's paper, that India's rural problem is psychological rather than technical, that is to say spiritual rather than material.

"Out of the heart are the issues of Life" is a truth which economists are apt to ignore or overlook. When a man's heart is honest and good his work is honest and good, and the state prospers accordingly. When a man's heart is not in his work the quality and quantity of his work suffers, and the state suffers accordingly. When the springs of life are clogged and poisoned at the source, the river of life cannot run strong and clear. The first business of the economist, therefore, should be to clear the springs and issues of life, so that the body politic may reach its maximum strength.

India's springs of life are clogged and poisoned at the source by debt, and the depressing effect of debt on the soul of man. Men are born in debt, live in debt and die in debt. Place a dead weight on a spring, as Mr. Pantalu of Madras has said, and its elasticity is gone: hence the want of spring in rural India. The great masses of the people may be described as one great depressed class; and until the depression is lifted by the lifting of the 900 crores of debt from the bent back of rural India, the body politic will remain feeble and anaemic.

Of the 350 millions of India I daresay 300 millions suffer from the bondage of the money-lender. If 25 per cent. of the energy of these 300 millions is lost by the depressing influence of debt, the loss of energy or pro-

ductive power is immense. And if another 25 per cent. is lost from malnutrition or ill-health or the absence of doctors and medicine, or the want of education—all due to debt and the want of cash or credit, the waste of India's potential energy is indeed colossal.

The General Medical Conference of All India has calculated the money value of the energy lost from preventible disease at several hundred crores annually, or say several thousand crores in ten years. Is it to be wondered at that the great masses of the people are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked? It is unthinkable that this huge loss of spiritual and material energy can be allowed to continue when the remedy lies close at hand.

If India's physical ailments and economic distress have their origin in spiritual causes such as the deadening effect of debt on man's soul, so also will the remedy be found in the realm of the spirit; for, upon the character of the people more than on anything else, depends India's spiritual and material welfare, and her place among the nations of the future.

The masses have no money excepting the soul- and body-destroying cash of the *mahajan*. But among the paddy fields of Bengal and the wheat fields of the Punjab can be grown that spiritual money called credit which will create a new spirit within the man, straighten his bent back, and strengthen his feeble knees so that he may stand erect upon his feet—a man in the full sense of the word. And the credit, which is simply the banking name for faith, will take concrete form in the shape of the larger crops of better quality which may be expected when the man's heart is in his work, and the profit comes to himself and his family.

It is the work of the Co-operative Department of the Bengal Government to plant this spiritual faith seed in

the hearts of the people and in the village fields; and, when the credit of the people has been developed and organised, it will be the business of the Government of India to monetize it and turn that credit into life-giving cash which will replace the deadly money of the *mahajan*. The replacement of the *mahajan's* cash by the people's own credit will clear the springs of India's life at their source, and her river of life will then run strong and clear.

It is a healthy sign of the times when young educated India is interesting itself in the affairs of rural India; and I, therefore, welcome this book by Professors Bhattacharyya and Natesan with its village surveys by their young friends. Perhaps in their next survey they will include the spiritual springs of the village, and show how these can be cleared.

Governments and economists and the business world are too much given to measuring a nation's welfare by the length of its railway lines, the number of its factories, the volume of its exports and imports, or the strength of its gold reserves. But "a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," and Ruskin was near the mark when he taught that the greatest nation was that which contained the greatest number of healthy and happy human beings. India contains the greatest number of human beings in the Empire, but it cannot be said that they are all healthy and happy. Upon the spiritual fitness of the man depends largely his health and happiness, as well as the quality and quantity of his work. The Indian economist will, therefore, I hope, give a due share of his time and attention to the things of the spirit.

As the spiritual and bodily fitness of the people increase so will India's exports tend to increase and her imports to decrease; and so will her gold and silver

imports grow to strengthen her foreign exchanges and her currency reserves. The Indian economist will, therefore, do all he can to promote the spiritual and bodily fitness of the people, so that India with her 350 millions of people will take that place to which she is entitled in the world's councils.

Strengthen the spirit, and the body politic will strengthen itself. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all things needful will be added unto you" is the soundest of sound economics.

D. M. Hamilton

INTRODUCTION

(By N. C. Bhattacharyya, Professor, Scottish Churches College, and Lecturer, Calcutta University)

Economic Survey in India

The nature of Economic Survey.

The problem of economic survey is the collection of a body of reliable data upon which conclusions regarding the wealth and welfare of a people may be based. "The purpose of the study," says Professor Bowley, "is twofold. First, that is, the purely scientific end of description, of classification and investigation of causes. Secondly, the utilitarian end of obtaining such knowledge of conditions and their relations, that we may be able to modify them with a view to constructing a society more in accordance with some ideal."[1]

In the sphere of pure economic theory as well as of realistic economics the starting point for all discussions and the basis of all conclusions is a set of reliable data. In countries like England, Germany and America, these materials which are found in abundance serve as a valuable guide to the economist and the administrator. Unfortunately, however, such data are very meagre in India. Besides a number of descriptive or statistical departmental reports of an inadequate character, and sometimes of doubtful authenticity, and the results of the stray attempts of enterprising individuals or associations, there are few materials to go upon. The position in Bengal is particularly unfortunate.

[1] *The Measurement of Social Phenomena*, Introduction.

Paucity of data in India.

It may be remembered, that the Economic Enquiry Committee presided over by Sir M. Visvesvarayya deplored the paucity of statistics and other necessary materials upon which an estimate of the national wealth of India might be based. The Director of Information in his Annual Report for 1926-27 was constrained to observe as follows: "The paucity of material for a systematic survey of economic conditions in India is revealed in a striking fashion in the report submitted in August 1925 by the Economic Enquiry Committee, which was formed under the presidency of Sir M. Visvesvarayya to examine the material at present available for framing an estimate of the economic condition of the various classes of the people of British India. The Committee found that many of the most elementary materials necessary for a satisfactory and adequate description of the economic condition of the Indian people were lacking. There were no statistics which might help in estimating average income, crop production, wages, the cost of living and other cognate subjects. No estimate could be formed of the national wealth of India because practically all the necessary statistics were lacking. In different parts of India, a number of economic investigations have been carried out by *quasi*-official agencies like the Board of Economic Enquiry in the Punjab, or by Universities sometimes with official assistance, and the official Labour Office in Bombay has done much valuable work in connection with industrial and general economic conditions in the Bombay Presidency, but those engaged on these enquiries will be the first to admit that they are only touching the fringe of the economic survey of India. In spite of this, however, there is not the least doubt that a good deal of material for such survey is available all over the country. The innumerable settlement reports which

have been written since the establishment of British rule in India and the countless official notes and reports of all kinds must alone be a veritable mine of information. Only all these require to be collated and examined by competent students of economics prepared to give years of work to the task." [1]

Royal Commission on Agriculture: its views on the need of economic enquiry.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture emphasises the need for the collection of economic data concerning the agricultural condition prevailing in India. The Report after pointing out that agriculture is the principal industry in India makes the following observation :—"For the systematic promotion of the welfare and prosperity of the agricultural population, exact and detailed information is required of the forces at work tending to produce a decline or an improvement in their economic condition; and it is difficult to frame remedial measures in the absence of accurate data on which the probable effects of such measures could be calculated." [2]

Co-operation and co-ordination of official and non-official agencies of enquiry.

The Government of India and the provincial Governments do not possess at the present moment adequate machinery by means of which statistics may be collected and economic survey carried on in the manner advocated by the Economic Enquiry Committee, which proposed the establishment of Central and Provincial Bureaus of Economic Enquiry. On account of financial and other reasons the Government of India have not yet been able to see their way to give effect to this recommendation of the Committee. In the circumstances the desirability and importance of non-official effort in the matter of social and economic investigation cannot

[1] *India in 1926-27*, p. 109.

[2] *Agricultural Commission Report*, p. 503.

be over-emphasised. Such non-official efforts will supplement and sometimes verify the results of departmental enquiries and statistics. In the matter of socio-economic surveys the co-operation and co-ordination of official and non-official effort is of the greatest importance. In fact in many fields of enquiry very little can be done unless official support and encouragement be forthcoming. On the other hand governmental agencies of research may be enabled to secure data of an accurate and exhaustive character through non-official co-operation and help only. Non-official enquiries,—and it may be added official enquiries in India also,—must carefully guard against one drawback in particular to which Prof. Bowley draws pointed attention in his introduction to *The Measurement of Social Phenomena*: "a considerable group of un-official investigation is subject to personal or political or propagandist bias,......... The scientific enquirer has indeed to approach his task with a mind free from preconceived ideas."

Economic investigation abroad.

In England the study of economic conditions of different classes of society, particularly of those whose standard of living is low or livelihood precarious dates from the publication of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People* in 1889. The statistical method of enquiry adopted by Charles Booth has been scientifically made use of by Rowntree and by the German and French economists. These examples as well as the regional studies of American sociologists will serve as permanent sources of inspiration for all who are interested in carrying on actual investigations into the different aspects of the life of the people.

The nature of Economic studies in Indian Universities.

The study of economics in Indian Universities and particularly in the University of Calcutta has been much too theoretical in tendency. In Bengal this has been

probably due to the influence of the Cambridge School of economic thought. In Cambridge economic studies are almost exclusively theoretical in nature. The great value of theoretical study of political economy cannot be denied. But there is a limit to theorising. Very little is gained by roaming continually in the realm of abstraction. The method and the subject-matter of study should be vitally related to the economic life of the people. It would seem highly desirable, therefore, to give such studies a distinctly practical bias at the present stage of economic evolution of India. One of the ways in which this wholesome change can be effected is the creation within the universities in India of Boards of Economic Enquiry. These University Boards will not only be able to render excellent service to the country by way of collection of valuable data but will also be able to encourage a spirit of research among the members of the University engaged in such work.[1]

Royal Agricultural Commission on the Universities and their part in the economic regeneration of India.

"The influence for good which the Universities can exercise over rural development is, we think, very great and in our opinion they have a definite obligation to use that influence.............There are two directions in which the Universities can render most valuable assistance; in regard to such technical matters as economic surveys of social conditions and secondly, in imbuing rural communities with ideals of leadership and service."[2] Again, "We appeal to both past and present members of Indian Universities to apply themselves to the social and economic problems of the country side, and so to fit themselves to take the lead in the movement for the uplift of the rural classes. We trust that the authorities and teachers of universities may do all in their

[1] The Allahabad University Village Service League affiliated to the University Faculty of Commerce is a pioneer organisation of this nature.

[2] *Agri. Com. Report*, p. 508.

power to encourage the study of these most important subjects."[1] In these eloquent words the distinguished signatories to the Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture urge the universities to take up the systematic study of rural life and labour. The Oxford University Institute for research in Agricultural Economics founded in 1913 may serve as a model for similar institutions in India. The Agricultural Research Institute at Oxford receives financial aid from the Ministry of Agriculture; it may be hoped that Provincial Governments or the Central Government will come to the help of like institutions in India provided that they show the requisite amount of efficiency and earnestness in the matter of economic research. In October 1928, a conference was held at Simla to discuss the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture; at this conference the Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces declared that if the teachers and students of the Universities should be willing to take up the work of village survey, financial and other aid might be rendered by the Government of the United Provinces. In pursuance of this policy that Government have recently made a grant to the Lucknow University for the creation of a Board of Economic Enquiry.[2] It may be hoped that Calcutta University which was the pioneer among the Indian Universities in the matter of introducing economic studies will not lag behind in this respect.

Economic Survey in India outside Bengal.

It would be wrong to suggest that nothing has been done in India in the line of economic investigation. Though our achievement is not considerable yet it is a fact that some very useful work has been done by certain enterprising individuals and associations, besides the Government

[1] *Agri. Com. Report*, p. 544.

[2] The Board has been inaugurated and has already begun its work.

Departments. G. Keatinge and Harold Mann in the Bombay Deccan. M. L. Darling, Ram Lall Bhalla, E. D. Lucas and H. Calvert in the Punjab, S. S. Aiyar in Malabar, and Professor Gilbert Slater in Madras have made valuable enquiries into the rural conditions in India. Professors Findlay Shirras and Burnett-Hurst have investigated some aspects of urban life; and the Chanakya Society of Patna collected a few years back a large number of family budgets. Particularly noteworthy contributions in the field of rural survey have been made by the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry who have collected a very useful body of statistics and other materials regarding life and labour in the rural Punjab. Some students of the University of Lucknow have made an interesting study of the economic conditions of the land and field labourers of Oudh and the nature of their holdings. The investigators worked under the able guidance of Prof. Radhakamal Mookerjee. A fair proportion of the teachers of Economics connected with the different Universities in India are also doing valuable work in the line of economic investigation.

In the sphere of economic survey as well as in the matter of practical attempts to improve the condition of the villages, the Punjab has set a good example to the rest of the provinces of India. Few have done such brilliant work as Mr. F. L. Brayne, M.C., I.C.S., late Deputy Commissioner, Gurgaon district. His first publication, *Village Uplift in India* (1927), in its second edition published under the title, "*The Remaking of Village India*" (1929), describes in a forceful and lucid manner "the conditions of the district, the remedies devised for them, and the machinery evolved to put these remedies into operation."[1] The district referred to is Gurgaon. The scheme

[1] *The Remaking of Village India*, F. L. Brayne, p. xix.

of reform inaugurated by Mr. Brayne for the removal of the all-round backwardness of the villagers has come to be known as the Gurgaon experiment or the Gurgaon programme. Workers in the field of village reconstruction will derive immense benefit from such an inspiring treatise as the one referred to above.

Mr. Brayne's second treatise, *Socrates in an Indian Village* (1929), with a foreword by Lord Irwin represents " the actual record of conversation between the author and some of the Gurgaon villagers with whom he has been intimately connected for several years past."[1] The conversations reveal the causes of the poverty and backwardness of the villagers; and "Socrates," Mr. Brayne himself, suggests his own scheme of reform. Lord Irwin concludes his foreword thus: " Mr. Brayne's book gives a clear and much wanted lead in this direction, and I recommend it with confidence to all those who have at heart the interest of the Indian ryot."[2]

Economic Studies of Rural Bengal.

R. C. Dutt and M. G. Ranade are the two Indian pioneers in the realm of Indian economics. The economic histories of the former and the Essays of the latter are permanent monuments in the field of economic research in India. In Bengal the study of village life including some of its economic aspects, however, goes back to a much earlier date than the writings of Dutt and Ranade. The first manifestation of the appreciation of the socio-economic problems of village life are to be found in the writings of the Bengalee *littérateurs* in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The study of the rural economy of Bengal was provoked by the economic ruin of rural areas on account of the ruthless exploitation of the Bengal peasants by the indigo planters. Thus we find in Pearycharan Mitter's

[1] and [2] *Socrates in an Indian Village*, pp. vii and viii.

Alaler Gharer Dulal a realistic account of the economic serfdom to which the peasants were reduced as the result of the oppressive policy of the Bengal planters. Dinabandhu Mitra depicts in his famous drama *Nil Darpan* the physical and economic oppression from which rural Bengal suffered at the hands of the indigo planters. Bankimchandra Chatterjee in his characteristic style declares that the *Nil Darpan* has rendered the same service in Bengal as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did in America ; the latter was responsible for breaking the shackles of the Negro slave in America ; the former freed the indigo slaves in Bengal. The protest against the excesses committed by the indigo planters was partly humanitarian ; but it had an important economic aspect as well. Before the Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885, was placed on the statute book, about the year 1872, Bankimchandra, for whom our admiration increases the more we study him, wrote a number of powerful essays on the economic injustice meted out to the peasants of Bengal by the tyrannical Zemindars. Bankim's essays on *Banga Desher Krishak* show a marvellous lucidity of exposition, careful collection and marshalling of facts. His data were mostly secured from Government reports, despatches, and from the results of original investigation carried on by his elder brother, Sanjib Chatterjee. Sanjib Chatterjee, the author of the once well-known, now forgotten treatise, *Bengal Ryots*, clearly set forth the unfortunate lot of the ryots during the middle of the nineteenth century. Many years later Lalbehari Dey described in his well-known book *Bengal Peasant Life* the mode of living, the joys and sorrows, the manners and customs of the peasantry of old Bengal. He gives a graphic account of the oppressive methods of the European planter and the Bengali Zemindar towards the peasantry.

In 1897 was published a Report on Agricultural Experiments and Enquiries in Burdwan District. It contained the economic survey of a village in Burdwan by Mr. A. C. Sen. It is one of the earliest, if not absolutely the earliest, intensive study of Indian village economy. From 1906 to 1910 Major J. C. Jack, the Settlement Officer of Faridpur, carried on his well-known study on the economic life of the district. The survey is as thorough and comprehensive as it is inspiring. It has helped the growth of the realistic study of rural economy in India and particularly in Bengal. Prof. Radhakamal Mookerjee studied some aspects of the economic life of the Province and the results of his labour were embodied in his *Foundations of Indian Economics.* Professor S. C. Panandikar, formerly of the University of Dacca, has made an important contribution to the economic studies of Bengal. His well-known work *Wealth and Welfare of the Bengal Delta* is based partly on personal observation and partly on reliable Government Reports and Statistics. In recent years the socio-economic study of village life in Bengal has been inspired by Rabindranath Tagore. Mr. Kalimohan Ghose, a distinguished member of the *Visva-Bharati* surveyed in an intensive manner the village of Ballavpore ; and Professor Arthur Geddes, formerly of the *Visva-Bharati,* Santiniketan, made a thorough study of the rural region surrounding the Academy. This survey entitled " In the Land of Tagore : the Rural Civilisation of Western Bengal and its Geographical Factors " was published in 1922 with an introduction by Prof. A. Demangeon of the University of Paris. Besides these studies mention may be made of the investigations by some Congressmen under the auspices of " The Palli Sanskar Samity " founded in memory of the late Mr. C. R. Das, and the enquiries of " The

Anti-Malaria Society" into certain aspects of village life.

The Census reports, District Gazetteers and records prepared by men like Mr. L. S. S. O'Malley and Colonel W. K. Firminger, Settlement Reports and the numerous blue-books issued by the different departments of the Government supply extremely valuable data concerning the economic life of the people of the province, particularly concerning rural economics. In fact, any investigator of rural economics will have to refer to the documents mentioned above before drawing any conclusion from the data he may be able to collect by personal enquiry. Reference here must also be made to the tracts and treatises published by the departments of Health, Agriculture, Irrigation and Education. In recent years Messrs. Addams Williams, C. A. Bentley and R. B. Rala Ram have studied respectively the drainage problem in the Ganges delta, the probability of eradication of malaria in rural areas by means of irrigation, and the effects and remedies of floods in northern Bengal. Mr. R. S. Finlow's tract on the water hyacinth problem and his treatise on the *Improvement of Indian Agriculture* are full of suggestions for the use of the economist and the reformer. These studies proceeding from experienced Government officials though not mainly concerned with the economic aspects of the problems of rural Bengal, nevertheless contain valuable data which are indispensable for the correct appraisement of the needs of present-day rural life.

The studies and enquiries mentioned in connection with Bengal are not all exclusively economic in character. Village survey in India, and for that matter in any part of the world, must involve a study of the other aspects of life, such as educational advancement, sanitary habits, social customs, etc. The peculiarly

socio-economic character of Indian life demands a socio-economic enquiry. Hence in the questionnaire which formed the basis of our investigation we deliberately included questions regarding the social habits, customs, and life of the people.

Method of Enquiry in India.

Keatinge's *Rural Economy in the Bombay Deccan* is one of the earliest studies of the village conditions in India in the present century. He took the facts relating to the Deccan from the statistics and reports published by the Bombay Government and from his personal observations during his term of office as the head of the Revenue and the Agricultural Department. But in the absence of an adequate machinery for the collection of statistics, and other information it is rather unsafe to rely exclusively on departmental figures and reports. Dr. Harold Mann, one of the first in India to advocate the method of local, close, detailed study of rural economic phenomena, was frank in his expression of doubt regarding some of the conclusions reached by Keatinge on the basis of Government reports and statistics alone. "One felt on the other hand," says Dr. Mann, "that many of the conclusions at which Keatinge arrived were extremely doubtful not because of the faults of his method, but on account of the inadequacy of his data."[1] Harold Mann, therefore, relied principally on the results of detailed, personal enquiry. Few in India have followed it with greater thoroughness and on a large scale than Major J. C. Jack in his economic survey of the Faridpur District in Bengal. Major Jack was in a position to carry on the investigation on a large scale with considerable regard for accuracy because as the Settlement Officer of Faridpur he had a large army

[1] *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village.*

of subordinate officers and assistants—"young and eager graduates of the Universities"—to help him in his laudable enterprise. "Each of these young graduates spent several months at one spot in the course of duties which engaged him in enquiries into the holdings of all the cultivators, into the capability of the soil and into the relations of tenants, both legal and customary, with their landlords."[1] In addition to these normal official duties which enabled Major Jack's assistants to come into close contact with the villagers and the rural conditions in general, they "obtained a vast amount of information concerning all the families of the village and frequently saw all the villagers and made many visits to their homesteads; (they) could collect the villagers together and without offending them discuss with each the amount of his income and the way in which he spent it."[2] Having realised the importance of personal contact with the villagers we laid special stress while handing over the questionnaire to the students on the necessity of close touch with the villagers for the purpose of ascertaining the facts concerning the different aspects of village life.

Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry.

It will not be out of place to give an account here of the constitution and method of research of the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry, since it is the one institution in India which can claim to possess to its credit very valuable and detailed study of some economic phenomena in the rural Punjab. The Punjab Board started as an official body in 1919; but in 1924 it was reduced to the position of a semi-official agency of enquiry for greater elasticity and freedom in the matter of management and research. It is a Board of 25 members, both officials

[1] and [2] *Economic Life of a Bengal Distric* J. C. Jack.

and non-officials, deriving their finance from the Punjab Government. The procedure of initiating an enquiry is thus set forth by the Secretary of the Board in his evidence before the Royal Agricultural Commission:—

"When work on any problem is contemplated it has grown to be our practice to refer the matter to a Sub-Committee for report. If their opinion is in favour of an enquiry being undertaken they are entrusted with the task of putting forward a workable scheme, if possible, in the form of a questionnaire. Not till this has been done is an investigator appointed. It has been our practice in the past to advertise for investigators, though, at the moment, we are trying the experiment of borrowing a man on deputation from the Revenue Department or Agricultural Department of Government. On the advisability of this latter move, there is a distinct difference of opinion within the Board. The minimum qualification for an investigator is that he has taken his B.A., though M.A.'s and B.Sc.'s in Agriculture are preferred. The investigator is set to work under a member-in-charge, who supervises his work and is expected to put the report into a form fit for typing for circulation to members. Before the report is passed for publication, the suggestions and criticisms of members are considered, preferably by a Sub-Committee, the recommendations of which are then considered by the Board."

The Genesis of the present Surveys.

The creation of Boards of Economic Enquiry in every province on the model of the Punjab Board of Economic Enquiry is an urgent necessity. As a humble and preliminary step to this end, on the 24th August, 1928, at a meeting of the Bengal Economic Society, I had the honour to

move a resolution which was accepted by the Society, proposing the formation of a Board of Economic Enquiry under the auspices of the Society. Our students at the Scottish Churches College were eager to make a survey of the rural conditions of Bengal, when we explained to them the nature of the work that the proposed Board would be called upon to perform. The enthusiasm of the students was indeed encouraging, and accordingly, Prof. L. A. Natesan, my former pupil, now my esteemed colleague, and myself framed a questionnaire for the use of my students on the lines of Prof. Gilbert Slater's. At a special meeting of the Scottish Churches College Economic Society, Prof. L. A. Natesan and myself explained the questionnaire at great length. We impressed upon the youthful investigators the necessity of caution in collecting facts, of personal touch with villagers and of verification of data collected with reference to the statements of as many different individuals as possible. The village surveys contained in this volume are the results of the students' efforts. For obvious reasons an enquiry carried on by students during their vacation cannot be a detailed one. We have, therefore, found it convenient to follow the line of enquiry adopted by Prof. Gilbert Slater, formerly of Madras University, under whose directions some valuable village surveys were made by the students of the University in the Southern Presidency. We venture to hope that the students' efforts are not without value in interpreting some of the problems of rural Bengal. Prof. Gilbert Slater had two advantages which the present editors were not fortunate enough to enjoy. In the first place he succeeded in securing for his student investigators the assistance and willing co-operation of district and village officials; secondly, his investigations were carried on

in a province where the old village administration were still intact. The village records of Madras constitute a veritable mine of valuable information for investigators. Unfortunately such records are not to be found in Bengal villages where the village administrative system is completely shattered and practically no machinery has yet been evolved to take the place of the old village system. The investigator in Bengal is, therefore, less fortunately placed than his *confrére* in the Madras Presidency.

The importance of village surveys in our country.

The importance of village survey is derived from the importance of Agricultural Economics. Special attention is being devoted to agricultural development and rural economics even in highly industrialised countries. In India, however, a systematic study of agricultural economics has been, until recently, neglected. The need of studying agrarian problems in India will be apparent if we consider the fact that " agriculture is and for many years to come must remain India's greatest industry. It provides occupation directly or indirectly for the great majority of the people of the country. The census returns of 1921 show that 224,000,000 people or 71% of the total population of 316,000,000 were directly dependant on agriculture. If we add the pastoral and hunting occupations the percentage rises to 73. In addition, the numerous village communities contain, besides those directly concerned with agriculture, many other members whose livelihood depends on the tillers of the soil and who are, therefore, supported by the produce of the countryside. Further, a number of others, combine agriculture with various urban pursuits. Trade and transport on which less than 6% and 2% respectively depend are also largely concerned with the produce of the soil. It has been estimated that more than 90%

of the people of rural India live directly or indirectly on agriculture."[1]

Since 1891 the proportion of the population directly supported by agriculture has steadily increased. The following figures will show the steady augmentation of the pressure on land of the total population directly dependent on agriculture :—

Year.	Percentage of total population.
1891	62
1901	68
1911	72
1921	72

The last is really no improvement since during the decade ending in 1921 the total population increased by only 1·2%. This is mainly the result of the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 which specially affected the rural population.[2] It is for this reason that Sir Thomas Holderness was constrained to note in his *Peoples and Problems of India* that there was probably no country in the world where the land was required to do so much.[3]

The cry for village reconstruction.

The accumulated effect of all these considerations will lead to the conclusion that the study of rural economics is the greatest need of the hour. In recent years the recognition of the importance of agriculture in the system of national economy has led to the recognition of the need for rural reconstruction. The appalling poverty,

[1] Howard, *Indian Agriculture.*

[2] Basu, *The Economic Development of India.*

[3] Perhaps it will not be out of place to remark here that these figures need not unduly disturb our equanimity regarding the future. "There are evidences of pressure of population in various tracts of India. At the same time no evidence appears that the limit of agricultural development has been reached so as to interfere with a further increase of population and density—*Rural Economy in India*—Mookerjee.

ill-health, illiteracy and the general backwardness of the Indian peasant have at last disturbed the pathetic contentment of the public and the Government, and it has now been realised that

> "... a bold peasantry, their country's pride
> When once destroyed can never be supplied."

Our villages are no longer the haunt of ancient peace as they used to be in the past. Far from being so they are to-day the abode of disease, degeneration and death. In India the decay of the village is synonymous with national decay as we are a nation of villagers and not of townsmen.

That is the significance of the cry "Back to the Village." This slogan first raised in Bengal by men like the late Mr. C. R. Das and others, has travelled to other provinces of India too. The necessity of village reorganisation is being emphasised all over the country by the press, the platform and by the thinking portion of the public in general. It is indeed regrettable that even some of the loudest advocates of village reconstruction do not seem to possess a real acquaintance with the problems of village life in their right perspective. In the circumstances, we venture to think that the study of the village conditions by the young men of our country should be encouraged. Such studies will supply us with the living facts regarding the different aspects of village life and thus enable us to tackle the problems of reconstruction in the proper manner.

Conclusion.

The editors do not claim that the surveys are without their faults. But at the same time they venture to hope that they will be of some use in stimulating original investigations into the rural conditions of Bengal by young men and women, particularly by the student community who have now

awakened to a sense of responsibility towards the dumb agricultural masses toiling, starving and dying of the simplest of preventible diseases. "We wish strongly to press the claim of the rural areas upon the time and interest of the best of India's youths." [1]

---

[1] *Agricultural Commission Report*, p. 544.

II

SOME PROBLEMS OF VILLAGE LIFE IN BENGAL

(By Professor L. A. Natesan, M.A., B.L., F.R.Econ.S.)

1. Material prosperity is the main theme of Economics. Any discussion which professes to deal with economic problems, if it is not a waste of breath, must throw some light on the prosperity of the people to whom it relates. One apparently insoluble puzzle to the average person is the differences in the prosperity of different countries in spite of similar geographical conditions. Even more puzzling is the case of a country which is astonishingly prosperous in spite of geographical disadvantages and that which is poor in spite of geographical advantages. There is no magic or mystery about it: it is a question of what the people do with their energy or working power. A village or province or country is as prosperous as it deserves to be. Just as one can be a bankrupt with a princely income if expenditure exceeds it and prosperous with much less, a country with all the bounties of nature may be poor or prosperous, according to the qualities of the inhabitants thereof. The emphasis is on the human qualities rather than on the geographical conditions.

In this article, the writer has endeavoured to examine from this standpoint some economic problems of rural Bengal, on which the succeeding surveys throw some light.

2. The approach towards the Indian rural problem has offered perhaps the most baffling of problems to our administrators, economists and social workers. It has proved too immense a task for any one of them to deal with comprehensively, and, therefore, successfully.

There are too many problems to be solved before the larger one of agricultural uplift can be successfully tackled. Problems that face us, such as those of illiteracy, indebtedness, economic backwardness, the health situation, social conservatism, fragmentation of holdings and of efforts, cover the entire gamut of the wealth and welfare aspects of Indian rural life. The right attitude towards these, along with other, problems of our national economy can be taken only with a perception of their relativity. The perspective has until lately been vitiated by an urbanisation of our economic outlook. The tendency has been to overrate the importance of the secondary problems of the mechanism of exchange, such as the Reserve Bank, the Ratio question, to the neglect of the primary ones of production and distribution. We have been accustomed to measure the extent of our prosperity by the number of factories that we have to the exclusion of the predominantly important industry of agriculture. We are appalled by the conditions of the factory worker but cannot see the semi-starved conditions of the agriculturist. The urban point of view has almost always got the better of the rural with the result that agriculture is divorced in our discussions from its environment. True, we have enough and more of agriculture; more manufacture and less agriculture is what is at present needed. But it is no less true that agriculture is far less remunerative and productive than it might be. The question of the moment is to increase the effectiveness of agricultural labour before questions of developing manufactures are considered.

The problem in all its facets is to be sought and solved in the villages.

3. Bengal has a total area of just over 52½ million acres or 2 million acres more than the area of Great Britain. Broadly speaking, the country is homogeneous,

in fact more homogeneous than the other provinces of India. The Census returns of 1921 showed a population of 47,592,462 giving a density of 579 per square mile. Of this population only 6¾ per cent. is urban. The rest is accounted for by the villages. Reduced to number per mille, for every 68 persons living in towns, there are 932 living in villages. The significance of the observations made in the preceding paragraph will be realised if this overwhelmingly large proportion of the rural population is kept in view. The population of the province has displayed an extraordinary tenacity to remain in the villages and there is no reason to believe that the tendency will be relaxed to an appreciable degree, as the increase in the percentage of the urban population during the last fifty years has not been more than 1·4 per cent.[1]

The increase itself has been due to some extent to fresh areas having become, or treated as, urban from time to time. The people of Bengal do not take kindly to town life. The wealth and welfare of the province centre, therefore, round the wealth and welfare of its villages.

4. The term "village" conjures up in the mind a picture of a self-sufficient community of people living in a close collection of houses belonging to the cultivators

Year.	Urban Population.	Actual Increase in the Decade.	Increase per cent.	Urban Population as Percentage of Total Population.
1872	1,857,504	...	...	5·35
1881	1,991,832	134,327	7·2	5·38
1891	2,223,378	231,546	11·6	5·53
1901	2,599,158	375,780	16·1	6·06
1911	2,968,247	369,082	14·2	6·52
1921	3,211,304	243,064	8·2	6·75

and agricultural labourers employed on the land for two or three miles around with its village watchmen, money-lenders, shopkeepers, artisans such as the weavers, potters, cobblers, tinsmiths, etc., with a place of common resort or public worship such as a temple or mosque. This description which is true of all the other provinces of India should not be used without qualifications in respect of rural Bengal. The main features of rural Bengal, and its villages have been ably summed up by Mr. W. H. Thompson.

"In Bengal the whole countryside except what is required actually for residential purposes has been brought under cultivation and the cultivators have no need to herd together for protection. The strictness of the *purdah* system, which does not permit his womenfolk from being seen at all in public and prohibits the Bengali from visiting the houses of other than near relations, has almost killed his gregarious instincts. The cultivator uses very little indeed which his own land cannot supply. A water supply can be obtained by sinking a well equally well in any spot. The property of a landlord or a middleman is usually far-fetched and interspersed with the properties of others and labourers who have not lands of their own are very few indeed. In these circumstances, it is not surprising to find homesteads scattered over the whole face of the countryside. Each cultivator has selected a suitable spot for a homestead on his own land, dug a tank, or made untidy irregular excavations to obtain earth to raise a site, and built a house on it. The process is still going on. When the family grows too big for the homestead or family quarrels ensue, one of the brothers will make a new homestead on a new site on a convenient part of the family land which has fallen to his share, a little removed from the old homestead. Shops are almost non-existent in rural Bengal and the houses of landlords and the few artisans who are not partially agriculturists are interspersed among the other homesteads. The cultivators' homesteads are, it is true, found very closely packed together in some localities, for example, among the swamps that stretch across Brahmanbaria sub-division and the eastern part of Mymensingh; but this is owing to the necessity for using to the full for residential purposes the little available high

ground. Close collections of houses in these parts are looked upon as uncomfortable places to live in ; there is no corporate life in them and the house sites do not tend to lie in compact blocks but rather in long strips by the side of streams, which by the deposit of their silt have raised their banks above the dead level of the rice fields. The absence of villages in the ordinary sense in the Province has brought to rural Bengal a number of advantages not the least of which is its beauty.

* * *

Missing the many unsightliness of the up-country village, rural Bengal misses also the disadvantages of overcrowding. Each family has plenty of space to live in and its own water supply which though it leaves much to be desired is a far better one than is available in rural parts of other provinces. In Eastern Bengal, it is ample and in most parts would be sufficient for the population if a relaxation of the *purdah* system permitted full use to be made of it. The water of a dirty hole on the ground from which earth was dug to raise the homestead site is, however, used to save the trouble and exposure of women to public gaze in going a few hundred yards to obtain a better supply. That the source of water is sometimes a source of disease and danger is due to the ignorance of the necessity to conserve it and to the prevalence of habits of life which led to its contamination. In some parts at least it is rather the multitude of small holes full of water than lack of water supply that has bred unhealthiness and the spread of malaria.

But the failure to develop villages has also meant a corresponding failure to develop corporate life and the absence of the germs of corporate institutions. True, there are already some institutions in existence : but to develop any form of Local Government something more is necessary to stimulate them and endow the village officials with increased powers. A local authority has to be constituted where nothing of the kind existed before. A matter of even greater difficulty is that the social qualities of public sense of duty, a will to subordinate private wishes to public advantage has to be grafted where it is in a wide sense a novelty." [1]

[1] *Census Report of Bengal*, 1921, pp. 124-26.

5. The statement which follows indicates the distribution of the population of the province in the various occupations. A glance at the figures indicates the comparative importance of the various occupations, and the part it plays in the economic life of Bengal.

TABLE.

Occupations.	Population.	No. per 1,000 of Population.
Agriculture ...	36,792,455	773
Industry ...	3,729,302	78
Commerce ...	3,179,349	67
Professions ...	783,288	16
Others ...	3,118,068	66[1]

Three quarters of the population depend on agriculture for their subsistence, while only one quarter is engaged in industry, commerce, professions and other occupations combined.

Put briefly, the prosperity of the province of Bengal depends upon the prosperity of agriculture. Anything that spells disaster to that industry affects the economic welfare of 36 millions of people. Anything which, on the other hand, promotes the interests of agriculture, effects an improvement in the welfare of the people engaged in it. The measure of the economic prosperity of Bengal, therefore, is the measure of the effectiveness in the application of the working power of 36 millions of people.

Let us take stock of the geographical capital of the province. As a gift of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, the province probably possesses one of the most fertile soils in India. Almost entirely alluvial in origin, it has

[1] *Census Report of Bengal*, 1921.

the valuable quality of easy cultivability despite occasional differences in the proportions of sand, clay and silt. Climate has conferred on the province an annuity of a fairly copious rainfall which is received from the Bay of Bengal monsoon current, between the months of June and October. Should this be deemed insufficient, two great rivers have combined to branch out into numberless courses serving a large part of the province. Nature has manifested herself in her most bountiful aspects especially in the deltaic area which is typical Bengal, with the result that the cultivator produces unaided and with a moderate degree of work sufficient to meet his requirements.

Economists are never tired of reiterating that it is the calibre of the human element that matters, not the geographical advantages. How the natural resources of the province are exploited by the population is the next problem.

6. Although four agents of production have been distinguished by economists, the agents may, broadly speaking, be reduced to land and labour, the latter comprising labour embodied in the concrete apparatus of production, that applied in the field of organization, and that towards the direct production of goods. The area of land is always a fixed and invariable factor, and the production of goods depends on the quality and quantity of labour in all its forms applied on it. There is at a given time a point of maximum effectiveness of labour any departure from which—an increase or a decrease—would bring about a diminution in the proportionate returns. Such points of maximum advantage can be distinguished not only in the case of labour directly employed but also in that implied in capital and in enterprise. For a given area of land, under a given condition in the arts, there is to be discerned a point of maximum productivity for labour which depends upon

its application in the right proportions. Any increase over this limit or any deficiency will operate in such a manner as to diminish the productivity, indicating that the factor is being applied less effectively than before.

Let us now consider how the labour factor is being applied to land in Bengal. The area available for cultivation among the ordinary cultivators, farm servants, and field labourers, numbering 11,060,629, has been given in the recent Census returns as 24,496,800 acres. The ratio of land to cultivator works out at 2·215 acres *per capita*. In other countries such as the United States and Argentina, where labour is comparatively scarce and machinery used to larger extent, the acreage per worker is greater. In England the ratio per worker according to the figures of 1911 was 21 acres, which is about ten times as much as that in Bengal. Mr. Thompson instances the case of South Africa, where the total area of farms was 229,270,000 acres of which 13,856,152 are under the plough. The recent census disclosed the workers as follows :—

	Male.	Female.
White ...	41,756	12,865
Native ...	254,623	104,350
Asiatic ...	19,627	4,044
Other Coloured ...	38,673	12,124
	354,679	133,388

Here the Europeans form 10·96 per cent. of the total and every agricultural worker has, on an average, 460·2 acres of land comprising both that under the plough and under pasture. " Cultivated land is only 6·1 per cent. of the total area of the farms, and even if the

workers spend one-third of their time on this small area there are 83 acres cultivated per whole-time worker. This is 38 times as much as the average worker in agriculture has to deal with in Bengal. Agriculture may not be so intensive in South Africa as in Bengal, but on the other hand, the alluvial plains of the Delta here yield their return with comparatively little expenditure of labour, and such figures as these make it very clear that the Bengali cultivator has not nearly as much work to do as will fill his time. This is the root cause of his poverty."[1]

This diagnosis lays bare to our view the fundamental cause of the economic backwardness of the Bengali cultivator. In other countries with comparatively large holdings, the farmer finds not only full employment for himself, but has actually to employ hired labour to do what he himself cannot manage. In Bengal the agricultural land has been so minutely cut up that the individual holdings are too small to provide enough work for the cultivator. This preponderance of owner-cultivators is indicated in the fact that for the whole province there are only 9,345 farm servants and 1,796,157 field labourers for an agricultural population of 9,274,927 workers and 21,268,653 of their dependants. This inadequacy of land is accentuated by the absence of other work to which they can turn their hands. The very tenancy legislation which seeks to safeguard the cultivator's position has been the chief enemy of his progress. The rights conferred on him under the land laws have stood in the way of an adjustment of supply and labour in the province. The existence of the rights is too great a temptation for him to sacrifice these rights when agriculture does not provide him sufficient employment and

[1] *Census Report of Bengal.*

has become unremunerative and go in search of work in industrial centres except when no other resource is left. This is the key to the entire economic problem of the province. The land in Bengal has to support too many people on its outturn. The law of diminishing returns has already begun to operate in the sense that the labour employed in the industry has far exceeded the limit of maximum productivity, with the result that the labour applied, as we stated at the beginning of this section, has become less effective than it might be. As Professor Edwin Cannan observed : "Mankind cannot produce an unlimited amount of calico, any more than an unlimited amount of wheat. It would be impossible to produce more than a certain amount, however many persons are engaged upon the production ; and long before that amount was reached, the amount of calico which could be produced by each unit of additional labour would begin to diminish. At any given time, or which comes to the same thing, knowledge and circumstances remaining the same, there is what may be called a point of maximum return when the labour is such that both an increase and a decrease in it would diminish proportionate returns." [1]

With an average density of 579 per square mile which far exceeds that of any other agricultural country in the world [2] the agricultural problem of Bengal appears to be intensified by what may be called a high occupational density in agriculture. The occupational density

Wealth, p. 68.

		Area of crops 1000 acres	Population (1000 omitted)	Density per sq. mile.
Bengal	...	24,497	47,592	579
Germany	...	82,241	60,900	332
France	...	90,910	41.476	195
Netherlands	...	5,489	6,865	544
U. States	...	955,883	117,858	32
Japan	...	15,370	56,000	376

is far more difficult to deal with than its local variant which is only a question of communications.

7. The cultivator in Bengal is thus handicapped right from the outset in his task. It will be noticed when his other circumstances are unfolded how this initial difficulty is intensified by other factors. Given land, the other requisites necessary for the maximum economy of labour are: (1) An adequate equipment in power, tools, and machinery; (2) An adequate technical knowledge of the science and art of agriculture; and (3) Superior business management.

A few words may be said about the second and the third factors before considering the first. The technique of agriculture, in common with other provinces of India, has hardly changed from the traditional methods followed by the forbears of the present cultivators. The methods followed for generations past are still being pursued without any attention being given to the changes wrought during recent times by the great progress of science. There is, further, little business management worth speaking about. The produce of the soil is mainly intended for the consumption of the family of the cultivator, and the problem of the disposal of the produce arises only with regard to the surplus left after the needs of the family are satisfied. This surplus is utilised for buying other things not produced on the land of the agriculturist. The modern problems of the cost of production, competition, margin of cultivation have yet to assert themselves in the rural economy of Bengal in the measure in which they have been felt by his *confréres* of the West. Despite this important limitation, the emergence of money crops such as jute, oil seeds, etc., has brought into existence the need for an economic management. With an entirely different set of circumstances prevailing over the larger part of the

industry, the producer of the money crops finds the organization ill-fitted to enable him to transform the results of his labour into prompt cash. The full benefit of his labour is seldom secured for him with a number of middlemen intercepting a large part of the profits he is entitled to. So long as agriculture is carried on on medieval lines, so long will this enterprising section of cultivators have to pay the cost of the inertia of the rest.

8. With regard to the first requisite referred to in the preceding section, the cultivator's equipment in Bengal is quite a modest affair. The bullocks and buffaloes supply the power, and a few comparatively crude appliances, just sufficient for the purpose, comprise his tools andmachinery.

The source of power presents a pressing problem to the cultivators in the villages of Bengal. Although the bullock or the buffalo is admittedly the cheapest from the point of view of its maintenance costs, it appears to be the most neglected aspect of Bengal's agriculture. The position of Bengal among other provinces is indicated in the following statement :—

TABLE.

(Per 100 acres of net area sown in 1924-25.)

Provinces.	Estimated Grazing Land.	Ordinary Cattle.			Buffaloes.		
		Bullocks No.	Cows No.	Others.	Adult Males.	Adult Females.	Others
Bengal ...	33	36	36	32	3	1	0
Assam ...	242	27	29	31	4	4	2
Bihar and Orissa.	56	27	23	19	8	6	4
Bombay ...	83	10	6	8	1	4	8
Central Provinces.	107	15	12	12	2	8	3
Madras ...	79	15	17	17	4	8	5
Punjab ...	62	16	10	11	1	10	8
United Provinces.	52	29	17	18	2	12	10

It is interesting to compare the relative position of the provinces. A glance at the table suffices to indicate that the ratio of grazing land to the cattle population in Bengal is the lowest. The surveys bear ample testimony to the difficulty felt in the villages. Except in the Pedong Block the authors of the surveys have commented on the inadequacy of grazing lands. The necessity for a large area of pasture has been felt in Daulatkhan. The playground and the sides of the Local Board roads provide all the pasture of Majpara The condition of the cattle has been characterised as distressing in Narail-Kurigram, where a pasture was a long-felt want and has been provided recently by the generosity of the local Zemindars.

The number of cattle in a locality has a direct relation to the demand for bullocks. The worse the conditions for rearing efficient cattle, the greater the numbers kept tend to be. The cows, in the absence of adequate attention being bestowed on them, become less fertile, and their calves under-sized.

The deficiency in cattle is sought to be remedied by breeding more cattle. Every increase in the number means an encroachment on grazing land, greater pressure on the available supply of food : the vicious circle is continued by a further poverty of the cows. In such circumstances the local deterioration is attempted to be countered by importation, from other provinces, of oxen or male buffaloes to supplement the poorer animal-power resources of the province. "This stage," declares the Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture, " is already reached in Bengal. The cows in this province are no longer equal to what in a reasonably managed herd would be an easy task. Large numbers of oxen are imported to supplement those locally bred. As cattle grow smaller in size and greater in number, the rate at which conditions

become worse for breeding good livestock is accelerated. For it must not be supposed that the food required by a hundred small cattle is the same in quantity as that required by fifty of double the size. As cattle become smaller, the amount of food needed in proportion to their size increases. Thus if a certain weight of fodder maintained one hundred cattle weighing 10 cwts. each for a year, the same supply would last two hundred cattle weighing 5 cwts. each only for about eight months. Large numbers of diminutive cattle are, therefore, a serious drain on a country in which the fodder supply is so scarce at certain seasons of the year."[1]

The recommendations made by the Commission on this subject deserve the careful study of those interested in the welfare of the villages, and in view of the gesture in evidence in favour of encouraging this industry, assistance from the Government will not be slow to come if private efforts are made to surmount the difficulties in the way. In a problem of such magnitude, private endeavour unless powerfully aided by State assistance is bound to come to failure.

Unless the problem of increasing the efficiency of cattle power in the province and relieving the pressure on the food resources is immediately solved, there is not much prospect of improving agriculture and conferring on the villages a substantial measure of benefit.

9. The significance of these problems before the villages of Bengal has been very much overshadowed by the annual floods devastating numbers of entire regions, and reducing their populations to extreme poverty. Irrigation in other provinces is mostly a demand for conserving and increasing the available supply of water for agriculture. The hydrographical resources of Bengal

[1] *Report*, p. 191.

have been far in excess of the need with the result that even parts which have a short rainy season, run the risk of inundation by river flood over low-lying regions. The danger of flood has prevented the cultivator from undertaking remunerative crops like sugar-cane. The possibility of recurrence of floods, of changing courses of rivers offers perhaps a case of first magnitude for careful diagnosis and control. While in the other problems considered, much depends on the individual initiative and enterprise, in the field of irrigation they count almost for nothing. It is only the State that can combat the water problems of Bengal. "There is also an intimate relation between the drainage system of a province and the prevalence of malaria, and waterborne diseases. The improvement of the drainage system is the most trustworthy guarantee against the disease, the most potent weapon to fight the disease." The complexity of the water problems of Bengal has been justly considered by the Royal Commission on Agriculture serious enough to warrant the establishment of a special department to deal with the various aspects of the problems. Sir William Willcocks declared that in his considered opinion "the canal system of Central Bengal was the secret of its previous prosperity. If there is one thing one has learnt in Bengal, it is that health and wealth have accompanied the overflow irrigation of the ancients and malaria and poverty have followed its abandonment. The first thing in Bengal is to give plentifully of the rich red water of the flood and so enrich the soil and combat malaria. The second thing is to supply October water which does neither of these. The first is for every year and every place. The second is only for the years in which the monsoon fails early." A different attitude on the subject of irrigation was probably responsible for allowing an ancient and efficient system of irrigation canals

to fall into desuetude, leading directly to the unsatisfactory economic situation; and that in a province where population is thickest and adequate irrigation most essential. There is some truth in what Ditcher wrote in the *Capital*: "There are parts of Bengal which the Government of India found a garden and left a desert, and Bengal as an administrative and economic unit never recovered from the grave economic injury thus inflicted." It would appear that the prosperity of the villages is inextricably bound up with a better and a wiser system of irrigation. To grow two blades where one grew is, doubtless, a laudable action; to grow three in place of two is still better; given adequate irrigation this feat can be accomplished in Bengal. What is even more important at the present time is the part which irrigation will play in combating malaria, the scourge of the Bengal peasantry.

10. The health position of Bengal presents the gloomiest picture. The authors of the surveys have, with hardly any exception, commented on the unsatisfactory conditions of the villages. Insufficiency of good water; indiscriminate use of water; taking water from sources already polluted by bathing, cleaning utensils, etc.; insanitary privies; lack of ventilation; tin-roofed houses producing intense heat during the summer; stagnant pools; water hyacinths; muddy roads; malaria: these roughly indicate the health conditions of the villages of Daulatkhan, Goila, Narkila, Majpara, Narail-Kurigram; and in fact, a large number of villages in Bengal.

The heavy burden cast on industry and economic life generally, by sickness and ill-health, is a factor that has yet to be investigated in India. The Balfour Committee on Industry and Trade in Great Britain brought out the fact that while the lost time in weeks in 1924 through disputes was 1,400,000, that through sickness was

26,045,000. Stated differently, the entire labour of 500,000 persons was lost in 1924 through sickness alone. This much for the direct loss. With the health of the worker are bound up such questions as mental outlook, physical efficiency, attitude towards management, economy in production, etc., all of which have a direct influence on the final cost of production of goods and services. From this point of view who can say what is the indirect cost paid by Bengal through malaria which slays its thousands, and lowers the efficiency of hundreds of thousands, cholera which sweeps the country from time to time, hookworm, Kala-Azar, and other diseases, arising from diet deficiency, insidiously debilitating the agricultural classes? The health position is positively bad. The urge for improvement will have to come from within and cannot be communicated from without. A large part of the difficulty, it must be conceded, is the villagers' own doing. Compare, for example, the picture drawn by the Report of the Royal Commission:

"Sanitation, in any accepted sense of the word, is practically non-existent. The public latrine is too often the bank of the river or the margin of a tank. This predisposes to hookworm infestation and to the spread of the diseases caused by a polluted water supply, for the same water is in many places used both for drinking and bathing purposes. The use of the open fields may not in all cases be open to the same objections, but here also every endeavour should be made to protect catchment areas by tanks and streams. Unprotected wells and tanks, unswept village streets, close pent-up windows excluding all ventilation; it is in such conditions that the average villager lives and yet succeeds in maintaining a remarkably high standard of personal cleanliness and tidiness. The tragedy is that such a state of affairs should exist when with corporate action on the part of the villagers, the evils would be so easily remediable."[1]

[1] Pp. 482-83

11. There is another important aspect which deserves closer attention and examination than has been accorded to it till now. Careful observers have noticed a close relation between nutrition problems and agricultural practice and conditions. The diet values and the relation of diet to disease may offer an explanation to the comparative ineffectiveness of the Bengali cultivator. Colonel MacCay who went into the question concluded that diet, other things being equal, is the all-important factor in determining the degree of physical fitness and the general well-being of the people. With a low protein consumption, it is impossible to expect anything better than a stamina deficient morally and physically. Colonel MacCay ascribes the general lack of physique in Bengal to a deficiency of protein in the Bengali's diet; if a contrast were needed, one has only to look to the inclusion of wheat in gradually increasing proportions as one leaves the north of Behar and Orissa and the United Provinces, to the Punjab and the consequent marked physical change in the population. Prof. Nitti observed long ago in discussing the food and labour power of nations, that

"In manufacture as in agriculture wherever energy is given out the well-fed labourer proves superior to the underfed......The people of the southern countries who, when underfed, have not the habit of taking alcohol or other stimulating substances, call in the aid of repose, drowsiness, idleness by the help of which they follow a regimen that would otherwise kill them. Eastern drowsiness, which sometimes looks like actual lethargy and the actual idleness of the southerner are really never anything but the effects of insufficient nutrition...An Englishman eats more and better than a German, he works more and better than a German; an American eats more than a German, Frenchman or an Englishman, and works more and better than any one of them." [1]

[1] *Economic Journal*, March 1896.

The conclusion to which these facts drive us is that a high standard of nutrition for all classes alike should be aimed at and encouraged ; that what is spent in good, wholesome food is a gain not only to the individual himself, but to the whole community which profits by his services. It is not certain whether the craving for drink may not be due to the direct effect of malnutrition.

From this point of view it is to be particularly regretted that the Department of Fisheries was abolished as a measure of retrenchment in 1923. The development of inland fisheries as a compensating factor to deficiency diet is to be regarded as a nation-building task of the first magnitude and as an urgent measure of rural amelioration in Bengal.

12. It will be clear to the readers of the succeeding pages how conspicuous industries are in the villages of the province by their almost entire absence. The soil bears the entire burden of the population of the villages. The industries of the villages, as disclosed in the Surveys, are mostly of a subsidiary character ancillary to agriculture and of a negligible type. Reference has already been made to defects of undue density in agriculture, and of the want of a balance of occupations in the villages. The higher density in the agricultural occupation has led to a lowering of the returns *per capita*. An increase of industry promises to correct the evils of an undue pursuit of agriculture, an industry subject to diminishing returns. A development of industries is calculated to relieve the pressure felt already and to raise the wages generally. The bane of the Bengali agriculturist is want of adequate employment throughout the year. If the cultivator is rich in anything it is only in leisure and that he seems to have in plenty. The trouble is that he has more of it than is good for him and his earning capacity. It is here that the

Charka promised a material improvement. But accustomed to securing a good return for little labour, the prospect of any other occupation must be very tempting indeed, if it is to attract the cultivator. Cottage industries must be no less remunerative than agriculture relatively to the labour spent in them, if they are to be given a fair chance in the villages.

More hopeful is the prospect held out by organised industry. The most important industry carried under modern methods of large-scale production in Bengal is the jute industry. The mills are at present situated mostly on the banks of the Hughly. In view of the disturbance of the family involved if the worker is to leave his village, it is important to explore the possibilities of stimulating the growth of jute mills in the interior. Of the possibilities there can be no doubt. Places such as Chandpur or Narayanganj offer natural facilities no less inferior to those about the Hughly. There is something in favour of the suggestion already put forward, of encouraging the growth of such industries in the rural parts worked by oil engines, with fuel imported from Assam or Burma and with local labour. The development of industries on a large-scale promises more than the *Charka*. The economic future of the province depends entirely on the discovery of some such safety valves for the diversion of superfluous labour from agriculture.

13. Under modern conditions of production, the efficiency of communications largely determines the scale of production, the cost to the consumer and the returns to the producer. Any inadequacy of the means of transport, whether from the want of good roads, canals or railways reacts on the cost and facility of conveyance and hinders the movement of goods. The freight charges are increased and consequently the primary marketing costs.

These additional burdens fall mostly on the shoulders of the cultivator. Defective communications also increase the cost of bringing goods to the village and hence the cost to the villager who consumes them. "The true income of the cultivator is largely dependent on the efficiency of communications."

On the importance of communications, as a factor of rural progress, the surveys throw valuable light, and offer food for reflection. The prosperity of Daulatkhan and Majpara is explained by the canal and the local board roads that serve them. Goila which is far away from the nearest railway station is connected with the outside world by means of the rivers. Narkila, on the other hand, is not so favourably located. "The nearest railway station is forty-five miles from Narkila." Although Bengal is, in many respects, better placed in the matter of communications than any other province in India, it is not possible to estimate how many Narkilas there are at present in Bengal cut off from the rest of the world, languishing for want of adequate communication, and prevented from developing to the full stature of their potential economic prosperity. If time and opportunity were at one's disposal it might be possible to estimate the cost to the country of bad communications.

Akin to communications is the case of marketing facilities. In the absence of village shops, the villages of Bengal have developed a number of *hats* or weekly markets. The traditional lore and experience of the cultivator only centre round the technical process of production on his holding. He lacks on the commercial side of his business. "Until, therefore, he realises that as a seller of produce he must study the art of sale, either as an individual or through combination with other producers, it is inevitable that he should come off second

best in his contest with the highly specialized knowledge and the vastly superior resources of those who purchase his produce." [1] The *hats* only appear to provide the means to the villages of supplying articles from other places. In respect of the three principal commercial crops—jute, rice and tobacco—an unusually large number of middlemen participate in effecting their movement towards export and consuming centres. In the case of tea alone, a highly organised industry carried on by a more competent class of producers, there are no middlemen for the marketing of the product.[2]

The marketing problem in Bengal essentially consists in securing to the cultivator a larger share of the price of the produce. The success of five Jute Co-operative Societies provided with their own godowns and baling machinery under the control of competent managers in securing the same price as their European rivals seems to indicate great possibilities for co-operative marketing.

The writer ventures to make another proposal : that the existing institutions may be improved upon to secure better marketing facilities to the cultivator. Bengal is, in a sense, fortunate in developing the habit of using *hats* in place of the village shops. The elimination of the shopkeeper and the predominance of *hats* offer a

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture.*

[2] " The procedure is for the primary collector to go from cultivator to cultivator or to visit the small primary markets purchasing the crops surplus to the needs of the cultivator and his immediate vicinity. Purchase is usually outright. The primary collectors take their purchases to the big centres of trade. There it is purchased by, or on behalf of, traders or financiers who may either export it to Calcutta, or more usually, sell it to a third party who has storage accommodation and will wait the time to sell to the exporter ....The amount of the commission varies from crop to crop and is differently computed by different observers but is not perhaps far short of 20 to 25 per cent. of the current value of the crop ' on the ground,' where the normal chain of these middlemen links the producer to the exporter." *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, Appendix to Report, pp. 69-70.

unique opportunity to develop a higher standard of commercial sense in the agriculturist. If some method could be devised by means of which some life could be infused into these *hats* to enable them to adopt sounder and more efficient methods, such as standardisation of weights and measures, grading of goods, storage accommodation, a co-ordination of the various markets in the province, cheaper railway charges, and the like, it will be more immediate in benefiting the cultivators than an entirely different organisation that needs to be developed. A policy of selling products in these reorganised markets in preference to the primary collectors, and timely publication of the course of prices in the other important trade centres, will go far towards ensuring larger returns to the agriculturist than he is at present getting. More often than not, the ignorance of the final prices paid by the exporter or consumer is one of the important reasons why the cultivator is not able to earn higher prices for his products. The wireless which has already proved its possibilities awaits a more economic utilisation in the villages for the dissemination of marketing information. This is by no means an impossible proposition as is proved by the experience in Germany, where " the state has good control of wireless, and aims at having relay stations all over the country so that even the smallest villages can be kept in touch with the market prices."[1]

14. Limitations of space preclude further commenting on other problems of no less urgency: tenancy, rural credit, housing, standard of living, education and local government. This necessarily brief review of certain aspects of rural life in Bengal leads to some important conclusions. The most fertile soil in the world is cultivated under conditions, social and economic, which

[1] *The Land and the Nation*, Rural Report of the Liberal Land Committee, 1923-25, Hodder and Stoughton.

are positive hindrances to its maximum productivity. What another writer has observed on England is word for word true in Bengal : "An amazing increase has taken place in our national riches, more is spent every year from our advancing riches and incomes of the richer classes in luxury and display, and *pari passu* the industrial population has gradually and painfully succeeded in making good its claim for a larger share in the wealth which it produces The poor toiler in the countryside is, however, left out in the cold. The means which have helped his fellow-countrymen are denied to him: his poverty, his lack of mental energy, the loneliness of his hamlet and cottage, all these things tend to neutralize the value of his citizenship and hamper any collective effort for better wages."[1]

It has been unfortunate economically that the ablest and the most enterprising section of the population has been attracted into Government Service or legal, medical, or other equally remunerative professions. But for the whole country this fact seems to possess only a feeble interest. Leadership, attraction of ability or talent in the field of manufacturing industry has effected a wonderful transformation in the traditional methods and scale of production. Agriculture alone seems to be placed beyond the orbit of leadership. Rural Bengal seems too weak even to retain its talents to herself. True, the professions offer a more tempting prospect than the dull scenery, the slush and mud of the roads, banks and fields, the mechanical, monotonous routine of the villagers who go to bed at sunset to save oil and candles, the careworn faces of the over-worked cultivators. The most important problem of the moment is to liberate agriculture from its present degraded position and elevate it to the status

[1] Bennet, E. N., *Problems of Rural Life.*

of other industries so as to offer an equally favourable field for the ambitious youths of the country. This cannot be done without making agriculture more productive and remunerative than it is at present. Prosperity and plenty may not come to the villages of Bengal so long as the land tenure, the helplessness of the cultivator, the apathy of the economically and politically conscious section of the people, the social outlook, sanitary conditions remain as they are. A piecemeal policy of progress is only tantamount to putting patches on an old garment. What is needed is that the entire system must be changed before agriculture can hope to come to its own. It is hoped that instead of being appalled by the immensity of the task, the present generation in Bengal will take it as a challenge to further effort to reach the desired goal. If a definition of the goal is needed, it is readily stated in Mr. Mreland's words :

" Every individual in India should have a reasonable chance of developing his capacities to the utmost in the interest of the country as a whole ....It may be affirmed with confidence that the welfare and prosperity of the rural population will not come by technical advances alone. If it is true that better living can be secured only by a combination of better farming and better business, it is equally true that the will to live better should furnish the driving power that is required : at the heart of the problem lies the development of the desire for a higher standard of living.........A vague aspiration now exists, and has always existed, but it is rendered ineffective by an inhibition which has to be broken up before large-scale progress is possible. In other words, the central problem is psychological not technical.....The will to live better must furnish the driving power without which the improvement in agriculture and commerce will not give an adequate return. The dominant feature of rural India at the present day is that the will to live better is not a force to be reckoned with, except in particular circumstances."[1]

[1] *Report of the Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture*, p. 499.

DAULATKHAN, DAKHIN-SHAHBAZPUR, BAKARGANJ

By R. K. Sen,

IV-Year Class

Introduction.

The village of Daulatkhan is more a trade-centre of the neighbouring villages than a village itself.

It has a police station of the same name. It falls under the sub-division of Bhola,[1] in the Dakhin-Shahbazpur Pargana, in the district of Bakarganj, and is situated in the island of Dakhin-Shahbazpur, formed by the deposition of silt in the mouth of the great river Meghna. The island is bounded on the south by the Shahbazpur channel, virtually a part of the sea, on the east by the Meghna, on the west by the Tetulia and on the north by the two rivers. Daulatkhan lies in the northern part of the island on the bank of the Meghna, the opposite bank belonging to the district of Noakhali. There are no forests

[1] Before the flood Daulatkhan was the seat of the sub-division which is now at Bhola. The name Daulatkhan is not unknown to many, especially to those who are familiar with the history of Bengal. Daulatkhan is famous for the great flood of 1283 B. S., popularly known as the Flood of '83. During that time the whole of Daulatkhan and the neighbouring villages went more than 20 feet under water. Thousands of men and animals lost their lives. Since that time Daulatkhan has steadily been shifting its position because of the inroads of the river. The village under survey is far away from the original Daulatkhan, the site of which according to local belief, has risen again in the opposite bank of the river Meghna. Properly speaking, Daulatkhan has been, in the course of 50 years, driven by the river into the village of Amani. The boundary selected for the present Daulatkhan is quite arbitrary.

The Daulatkhan Police Station has a very large jurisdiction. Formerly it used to have 57 villages under it, but since September 16, 1928, 59 villages more have come under its sphere of authority. Another Sub-Inspector is shortly coming to help the present Sub-Inspector in charge in his increased work.

worth mentioning near Daulatkhan. It is covered with jungles and gardens of betelnuts and cocoanuts. There are no railways in the whole district. Apart from the wide river already mentioned there is a network of canals fed by the rivers. At Daulatkhan the river is about 5 miles wide, and further down it stretches itself to 8 or 10 miles. As the whole place is very near the sea, the river is steadily being silted up causing the upheaval of many *char* lands and finding its own way by breaking through the main banks.

The village can be roughly divided into 3 parts: (1) Bandar or the Bazaar where the traders live; (2) the Court of Wards office quarters, where the officers live; (3) Amani, where the inhabitants are mostly native. It may be added that the Court of Wards office is responsible for the administration of a group of estates, known as the Dakhin-Shahbazpur Group of Estates. There is also a Post and Telegraph Office situated within the Cutchery compound.

A. Population.

1. *Total population*—966 (corrected up to November 15, 1928).

2. Of the total population 402 are female and 564 are male. Although the Mahomedans form the majority in this part of the country, the Hindus predominate in Daulatkhan; for the officers of the Court of Wards (21 families) and the traders (540 of the Bandar, *i.e.*, the Bazaar) are mostly Hindus. Again, the majority of the traders who have come from outside have not brought their wives with them. Hence the disparity between the number of the males and the females. There are about 15 families of Brahmins (of which not one is a local man) in the village. The Hindu traders are mainly

Sudras—such as Teli, Shau, Bania, etc. There are some Baidyas and Kayasthas too in the village. The rest are Namasudras (Vuimalis) and Baisnabas.

3. *Births and deaths.*—The figures for births are probably influenced by immigration. During the last three years the population of Daulatkhan has increased by about 8 per cent. The trader class shows the largest increase. The births in the village have also been considerable.

4. About 85. I exclude all those who live alone, *i.e.*, who have not brought their wives with them.

5. The total number of children under 15 years of age in the village is about 264.

(*a*) 264.

(*b*) During the last three years about 22.

6. The total number of homesteads in the village is about 152.

7. Separate records for the village under review are not kept in the Police Station. So I give the following statistics which include all the 57 villages under its jurisdiction.

Year.	Births.	Deaths.
1926	1,493	967
1927	1,602	1,302

During the previous year (1927) within the boundary of Daulatkhan there were about 7 deaths and 11 births approximately.

8. Among Namasudras: for boys 18 years and for girls 8 years (among the Bazaar Hindus: they go to their respective homes and marry).

Among the Bazaar Hindus: for boys 25 years and for girls 10 years.

Among the C. W. Office Babus: they go to their homes and marry.

Among the local Mahomedans: for boys 20 years and for girls 8 years.

9. As the population chiefly consists of migrators (traders and employees of the C. W. office) the localisation of caste is not a very marked feature. Only one class, the Vuimalis, lives altogether separate in Amani. In the Bazaar and in the Court of Wards office, the Brahmins, the Kayasthas and others live side by side.

It has to be stated that there is a certain amount of communal feeling among the villagers here. But the communal differences made their appearance only after the Calcutta riots of 1926. During that period they gave expression to them in the form of disrespect to Hindu idols and customs. For example, one morning a cow was found to be lying neck-chopped before the place of worship. However, no riots of any sort occurred in the village. At the present time the communal feeling on the part of the Mahomedans has been confined to protesting against music before mosques. But no fanaticism exists.

B. Sanitary Conditions.

Before entering into the details a few words may be added about the Charitable Dispensary maintained chiefly by the Court of Wards. As 99 per cent. of the patients coming to the dispensary come from outside the village, the statement of the dispensary clearly does not represent the health conditions of the village. But as the health conditions, however, of a larger area may be useful in

indicating roughly the position of this village, I quote the statement below:—

For the year 1927.

Name of Disease.	No. of Cases.
Cholera	38
Kala-Azar	55
Influenza	49
Malaria	342
Rheumatic Fever	448
Anaemia	298
Dysentery	238

The diseases above mentioned are only the main diseases prevalent in the neighbouring villages and the number of cases indicates only those who come to the dispensary for treatment. Had the out-door patients been reckoned, the number, especially of Kala-Azar cases, would have been far greater.

The dispensary is also aided by the District Board and the Khas-Mahal. During the year 1927, the total expenditure was Rs. 240 by District Board and Rs. 60 by the Khas-Mahal.

B. Sanitary Conditions of the Village.

1. In comparison with the neighbouring villages, Daulatkhan is a fairly healthy place. In spite of some stagnant pools in the village favouring mosquitoes the number of the cases of malaria is small within the village area. At the present moment (Nov. 1928) only 3 persons are suffering from malaria and none of them

lives within the Cutchery compound which is more neatly kept. During the year ending 31st March 1928, the amount of quinine sold through the Post Office was 11 lbs.—6,760 grs.—valued at Rs. 256-3-6 and of this only about 4 per cent. was purchased by the villagers. Cholera is a more or less prevailing disease in the neighbouring villages and is very much dreaded during season time (from Falgoon to Baisakh). Our village is not much affected by it. During this year (1928), 7 persons were attacked with cholera of whom 4 died. During 1927, there was not a single case. It is stated that there is no tuberculosis or small-pox in the village. Only the year before last, a man died of small-pox but it was a case imported from Chittagong. Some cases of chicken-pox are, however, heard of now and then. Kala-Azar is plenty, almost in every house in the neighbourhood but not much within the village itself. Among other diseases dysentery and influenza (during winter) may be mentioned.

2. There is, as has already been noticed, a charitable dispensary run by the Court of Wards. A Sub-Assistant Surgeon assisted by a passed compounder is in charge of it. There are also 5 petty doctors who have their shops in the Bazaar dealing in patent medicines. None of them save one who is an M.B. (Homeo.) are passed doctors. They have their practice chiefly in the neighbouring villages.

3. The Cutchery Babus, on the whole, maintain a high standard regarding sanitation. The rest of the population is mostly a low-class people being the shop-keepers of the Bazaar, who are unclean in their habits which leave much to be desired. Skin diseases are common among them. They hardly take the trouble of clearing jungles even in their own abodes. In many cases the cow-sheds are made in the immediate vicinity of the rooms. Another serious cause for complaint is the bad arrangement of the latrines.

The Bazaar people live in a congested area. They suffer most from lack of ventilation and from extreme heat during the summer. The houses with corrugated iron roof in the Bazaar may be compared in summer to a boiler room. The Cutchery people live in greater comfort. They have got separate quarters with sufficient space. The homes of the native Mahomedans are all situated in the centre of extensive betelnut and cocoanut gardens. They have, in most cases, ponds of their own and they seem to be cut off from the rest of the village.

The village of Daulatkhan is fortunate in its rather abundant supply of water. But then it is not always drinkable water. The whole supply is derived from tanks and tanks only. The number of tanks in proportion to population is quite large. For example, within the area of Daulatkhan there are altogether more than 50 tanks, large and small. In Cutchery alone there are 5 large tanks and 5 small ones with a population of 97 heads only. There is also a canal (practically converted into a large lake by means of an embankment) of still water. But its water is not used for drinking purposes. No wells can be sunk in the extremely soft soil and there is no need of them. The drinking water of the village is supplied by the larger tanks while the water of the small tanks is used for domestic purposes. None uses the water of the river as it is too dirty and saltish. The villagers generally have their water purified with alum before drinking. During the cholera season they boil it. During the winter the water in every tank remains fairly clear.

5. The villagers bathe and wash clothes in the same tank as that used for drinking purposes, but these generally being the larger tanks the drinking water is not much affected except in summer. However, there

are two reserve tanks in which washing is not allowed (but the rules are not always strictly observed).

6. There is no regular drainage system in the villages. All the rain water flows from the fields and the streets into the pools and tanks. There are a number of stagnant pools in the village, useful in a way and latrines are generally erected over them. The villagers do not care to clear pools or jungles for public good. The mosquitoes thrive in these breeding grounds and it is quite impossible here to do without curtains. Snake-bites are rare.

7. Housing conditions in general are poor. The majority of the people live in congested areas. The Bandar consists of about 94 homesteads including the shops. The total number of homesteads in the village is about 140 of which only about 25 are thatched and the rest have corrugated iron roofs. The village is subject to frequent visitations of cyclones ; hence the preference of corrugated iron houses to those of bamboo with thatched roofs. Moreover, the thatched houses have to be rethatched year after year which proves rather expensive in the long run. The houses, again, are badly constructed, the main defect being scanty ventilation. The windows are few and low, and accommodation is scanty.

C. Land, Agricultural and Non-Agricultural.

1. *Area of land cultivated*—about 60 *bighas.*

(It should be noted here that I state only the area that belongs to the villagers ; there are other lands in the village that belong to outsiders.)

In addition to this, there is a Demonstration Garden

of the Court of Wards Estate. The garden covers about 5 *bighas* of land.

2. *Fallow land.*—Its area is not jungly. There is not much fallow land in Daulatkhan. Whatever there is, is land made by the silting up of the canal. This plot may be open for settlement in the near future. The area is about 25 *bighas*. The lawns of the Cutchery cover about 5 *bighas*.

3. There are gardens of betelnut, cocoanut and a few other trees. These gardens belonging to the villagers, cover about 128 *bighas* of land.

4. There are no wells in the village. For agricultural purposes rain water is found sufficient.

6. The Zemindar of the village, that is the Court of Wards, does not effect any improvement in the soil. But in many cases, however, it has saved farmers' lands from ruin by closing the river which makes its opening in the land in the shape of canals and carries on a destructive campaign. The Court of Wards is doing much good work in other ways, such as by constructing roads so as to bring the far-away lands within easy reach and thereby increasing their value.

7. There are two kinds of land : paddy land and betelnut gardens. In the case of paddy land the selling price is Rs. 2,000 per *Kani*[1] or about Rs. 105 per *bigha*. In other cases it is Rs. 4,000 per *Kani* or about Rs. 210 per *bigha*.

8. There are about 34 villagers who own lands within the village, of whom some hold extensive paddy lands in the *chars*. The total area of paddy lands is about 649 *bighas* ; therefore the average holding becomes 19 *bighas* approximately per head. Again, there are about 128 *bighas* of betelnut gardens owned by these people. Therefore, the total average holding comes to 22·8, approximately, *bighas* per head.

[1] 1 *Kani*=19 *bighas*.

D. Use of Land.

1. The land-owners of the village are mostly rich people. They hire labour to cultivate their lands. There are, however, a few poor men who own some land and cultivate it themselves. They are less than 6 in number.

2. There are about 34 land-owners who do not cultivate their lands themselves.

3. There are a few tenants (tillers) in the village, but none of them own lands.

4. Such workers come from other villages. There are only 3 persons here who may be reckoned under this head.

5. The average rent per *Kani* (1 *Kani*=19 *bighas*) per year is Rs. 25, or Rs. 1-2as.-6p. approximately per *bigha* per year.

6. Let us suppose A owns some land. B and C come to him and propose that they will cultivate A's land at their own cost. A agrees. B and C bring their own oxen and ploughs, sow their own seed and apply their own labour. Finally, when the crop is raised, A gets half the total amount of the harvest as the price of the use of his land. In case of chillies, potatoes, etc., which require more labour and capital than do the other ordinary crops, the land-owner gets about $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ is taken by the cultivators.

E. Agriculture.

1. In our village jute cannot be reckoned as one of the principal crops raised. The local farmers rarely cultivate it and on such occasions only in a small scale, because jute does not grow here easily owing to the saline character of the soil. I give below the names of

the crops that are raised in the largest amounts and their respective prices.

Name of crop.		Prices.
(a)	Moog	Vary from Rs. 4 to Rs. 9 per md.
(b)	Kalai	" " 3-8as. to " 5 " "
(c)	Chilli	" " 4 to " 10 " "
(d)	Rice	" " 6 to " 8 " "
(e)	Jute	" " 7 to " 18 " "
(f)	Betelnut—Magai .. .	" " 7 to " 8 " "
(g)	" " Tati . ..	" " 12 to " 16 " "
(h)	Cocoanuts	" " 40 per thousand

2. Most of the farmers raise only one crop per year. The area yielding one crop is about 48 *bighas*.

3. About 20 per cent. of the farmers do two crops per annum. The approximate area is 12 *bighas*.

4. The farmers who cultivate three crops are very rare in the village, almost *nil*.

5. The local cultivators are very conservative. They will not buy any novel implement which might increase the efficiency of their labour. They generally use the most ordinary implements, *e.g.*, ploughs, spades, *khurpis*, scythes, etc.

6. There are scarcely any buffaloes in the village. Oxen are used for agricultural and other purposes. Their condition cannot be said to be satisfactory. They are neither too thin nor quite healthy. They do not always get food enough to enable them to stand the hard labour they have to undergo. In comparison with the stock of the up-country they are but pigmies in size.

7. The usual fodder of the cattle is grass and straw. The villagers keep straw and sometimes *khesari* pulse in reserve for the rains when the fields go under water. There is no common pasturage in the village. The lawns of the Cutchery, however, are used as such for the cattle

of the Cutchery Babus. The stock that belong to the Court of Wards are paid special care and they are given husk, oil-cakes, pulses, etc., in addition to straw and usual grazing. The village cattle suffer most during the rains. The sheds which are both inadequate and insanitary, provide poor shelter to the dumb animals which pass their nights standing in mud. Wild plants grow freely round the sheds which is the most neglected part of the house and consequently mosquitoes and leeches take a heavy toll on their blood. The only cows and oxen whose condition is better are those belonging to the Estate. Elevated and cemented sanitary sheds are provided for them.

8. Generally the villagers breed their own cattle. They rarely purchase them. They have no particular methods of breeding. But it must be admitted that they at least try to have their kine crossed with strong healthy bulls. In 1926 a bull was purchased from the Government Farm at Rangpur by the Estate and since then many villagers bring their cows and avail themselves of the services of the bull free of charge. If more such bulls are brought in, it is likely to bring about an improvement in the health of the cattle of the next generation. The cases of purchases of the cattle made in the local Bazaar are very small (save during the Id festival when hundreds of them are sacrificed). The price generally ranges from Rs. 30 to 40 per full-grown animal. Oxen are, as a rule, somewhat cheaper than cows.

9. The soil of the land being naturally fertile the villagers do not generally use manures. Sometimes, however, they burn the stubble left in the fields after the harvest has been reaped and the ashes are mixed with the soil to increase its productivity. But green manure is rarely applied. Oil-cakes as manure are used only in the *pan* plantations.

10. No improvement is to be noticed in cultivation. The village does not get any help from the Veterinary Department. As for the Agricultural Department, a Demonstration Garden in charge of an Assistant Sub-Overseer is maintained by the Court of Wards. The duty of the Assistant Sub-Overseer is to raise ideal crops in his garden by improved methods of cultivation, to demonstrate the result to the farmers, and to instruct them how to attain the same result. But lack of initiative in the Assistant Sub-Overseer on the one hand, and the extreme conservatism of the farmers on the other, have stood in the way of any practical improvement in local farming.

11. The cost of cultivation per *bigha* is about six or seven rupees.

12. 60 per cent. of the cultivators work with their own ploughs and bullocks; only about 5 per cent. hire them. The rest let out their lands on *Barga*. The rate of hire is generally Re. 1 per day.

F. Village Industries.

There are no industries in Daulatkhan. In the neighbouring villages there are yet some handlooms for weaving and some plants for extracting mustard, but as for cocoanut and *til* oils they show no signs of life. There is also a blacksmith in the village. The dominating cause is competition that comes in the form of imports. The people who are still employed in such occupations are generally whole-timers; they have no other calling. Another reason why the industries are dying out is that people generally get enough from agriculture, so they do not care to take to industries.

G. Village Trade.

1. There are a number of trades in the village. Of the small traders the grocers require mention. They are

17 in number; all the shops are situated in the Bazaar. Some of the grocers sell clothes and miscellaneous articles. Next in importance are the tailors; they are four in all. There is a good demand for their services. The goldsmiths of whom there are six in the Bazaar come next; there are also 3 traders who deal in earthenware. During *hat* days (Tuesdays and Saturdays) many other dealers come to the village and sell their merchandise.

2. The village-folk bring their fish and milk daily in the morning to the Bazaar where they are sold. Vegetables and other articles are sold on *hat* days.

During *hat* days plenty of goods flow in from the neighbouring villages. Most of them are purchased directly by the merchants (in some cases through intermediaries) of the Bazaar for the purpose of exportation. Daulatkhan is conspicuous for its export and import trade. I give below the quantity of the chief goods that flow in and out of the village. The figures are taken from the Statement Book of the Steamer Office located here.

Export.

Name of Goods.	Mds. exported.	Approximate Value. Rs.
1. Betelnut—Tati ...	1,02,455	18,44,190
2. Do.—Magai ..	4,198	33,584
3. Seeds, Grains and Pulses...	2,561	—
4. Khui	1,789	—
5. Cocoanuts (contg. 20 in bag).	1,191	—
6. Rice	114	—
7. Chillies	23,263	16,284
8. Jute	31	(In 1925-26 it was 962 Mds.)

Import.

	Name of Goods.				Mds. imported.
1.	Kerosine ...	...	...	...	9,166
2.	Sugar ...	...	...	...	6,009
3.	Mustard oil	...	...	...	4,349
4.	Timber ...	...	...	...	4,025
6.	Gunny bags	...	...	...	3,017
6.	Galvanised Corrugated iron sheets...			...	8,629
7.	Rice ...	..	...	...	2,396
8.	Grains, pulses, seeds ...		...	...	1,818
9.	Tati-Betelnuts	...	...	...	1,044
10.	Turmeric ...	...	...	...	1,409
11.	Oil cakes ...	..	...	...	672
12.	Cloths ..	..	...	...	227
13.	Tobacco ...	...	...	...	85

The amount of exports and imports may vary from year to year but not to a large extent. From the above figures it will be easy to see what a large trade our village has. There are many other items which I have not quoted as they are comparatively insignificant. On the whole our village is left with a favourable balance of trade. Most of the big merchants are, by the way, Marwaris of whom there are 4 families in Daulatkhan.

3. Four unmetalled high roads (3 by District Board, 1 by Local Board) meet in the Bazaar, the centre of the village. The first connects it with the Steamer ghat, the second with Bhola (13 miles off), the third with Bethna (2 miles off)—this road goes round to meet the District Board road to Bhola—and the fourth with a large number of large and small villages ending finally at Mehergunj more than 35 miles to the south. These roads provide the means of transport, the sole conveyances being bullock-carts. There is but one river, already referred

to in the introduction. It is used to bring crops down from across the *chars.* The canals form the chief means of transport for the neighbouring villages. But at present they are occasionally blocked by the rapidly growing water hyacinth.

The village itself may be said to have some commercial importance as may be evident from the statistics given above. Daulatkhan lies in the immediate vicinity of Bhola, the seat of the sub-division and a rapidly rising town. It is again situated midway between Barisal and Chittagong with which trade is being constantly carried on.

H. General Economic Condition of the Village.

1. Altogether 16 families comprising about 180 persons depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. Of these (*a*) 12 families—about 146 members—are wholly dependent, and (*b*) 4 families—35 persons—are partly dependent. The subsidiary calling, in two cases, are services in the Court of Wards Office. The third man is a shop-keeper in the Bazaar and the fourth acts as middleman between the farmers and the merchants of the village.

2. There is no cottage industry within the village area. Some village-folk, however, make mattresses, baskets, fishing nets, etc., but all for their own personal use. They do not make them on a scale sufficient for trade in them.

4. (*a*) About 11. They are always paid in money. The general rules are 12 annas per day without rations and 8 annas per day with rations.

(*b*) There are no settlement of barbers or washermen within the area of Daulatkhan. They all come from the neighbouring villages. They too are paid not in kind but money (one anna per hair-cut and shave).

5. In our village, people have mostly come in to settle and make money by trade. They do not go out for service. From among the local people only 6 persons have gone out to the cities to earn their bread by service.

6. (*a*) Number of teachers—15; (*b*) Pleaders—*Nil*; (*c*) Civil servants—*Nil*; (*d*) Persons serving as employees in cities—*vide* article 5; (*e*) Persons serving in factories in cities—*Nil*; (*f*) Persons in the employ of the zemindar, mahajans and traders: the zemindar of the village is the Court of Wards. It has 28 employees including the peons and the guards. In this village the mahajans are more prominent as merchants. The total number of employees of the mahajans and other traders are about 20.

7. During hours not spent in work connected with the cultivation of land the agriculturist either indulges in idle talk among his friends or sleeps away the while. In some cases he knits small fishing nets.

8. When agricultural conditions are abnormally bad due to floods, late arrival of rains, excess of untimely rain (absolute drought is not known here nor do the locusts invade these parts), etc., the cultivators then blame God, sit idle, and starve. They are too lazy and silly to seek for other occupations in order to save themselves. In this country, however, such conditions are not uncommon. When the agricultural conditions are abnormally good, so much the better. The cultivators rest assured of their year's crop and some extra profit, do not try to take the best advantage of the favourable conditions. When conditions are normal both ways, they are equally unmoved, *i.e.*, they refrain from working in slack seasons.

9. There is no tendency in the young men of the village to emigrate to the towns.

10. Food products—Average price :

		Rs.	per md.
Rice	...	7	„
Pulses	...	9	„
Milk	Varies from 2 as. to 6 as. per sr.		

All the milk comes from outside the village.

The price of fish depends solely upon the daily demand and supply. Fish is not sold here per seer. As the local fishermen are not enterprising enough the villagers do not get plenty of fish except in the rainy season when *Hilsha* is abundant.

11. The village-folk are very reluctant to disclose their savings. In some cases they altogether deny that they save at all. But I am inclined to think that about 60 per cent. of the villagers are in a position to, and they do, save something from their incomes. None of the Bazaar people have any bank accounts. Some of the officers of the C. W. Office and a few other people have accounts with the Post Office Savings Bank. The total number of Pass Books is 28. There is also an agent of an insurance company in the village who has procured 32 cases from among the villagers alone. The details are given below :—

Value of Policy.	No. of Cases.
Rs.	
5,000	1
3,000	1
2,000	2
1,000	28

12. Accurate numbers of families in debt are difficult to get. About 22 families of the village are indebted to the *Mahajans*. The percentage is about 25.

13. Indebtedness is generally due to excess of family expenses over incomes, borrowing of capital in order to start new trade, failure of existing trade, etc. Cases of indebtedness due to litigation and poverty within the village are rare.

14. Nearly all the big shop-keepers of the village advance small and big loans to those who want them. The chief mahajans of the village are 15 in number of which 4 are Marwaris.

15. The usual rate of interest is Rs. 2 per 100 per month, *i. e.*, $24_{\circ}/^{\circ}$.

16. On September 5, 1927, a Co-operative Credit Society was established in the Bazaar. It was named the Daulatkhan Urban Co-operative Bank. The organising committee consisted of a chairman, a secretary, a cashier, and 6 directors. All of them had to become members of the bank by buying a share of the value of Rs. 10. The committee generally meets at an interval of 15 days. On April 29, 1928, Rs. 2,000 was advanced to this bank by the Bhola Co-operative Credit Society at an annual interest of Rs. 9-6-0 per hundred rupees. The Daulatkhan Urban Co-operative Bank does not advance loans to non-members, and those who are not urban people cannot be admitted as members. The people can both take loans from, and keep deposits in, this bank. Non-members are permitted to deposit money in the bank. The deposits may be fixed or current. No interest is given on current accounts. In case of deposits which cannot be withdrawn within 4 years from the date of deposit the interest allowed is $8^{\circ}/_{\circ}$. The rate of interest at which the bank advances its loans is at present $12\frac{1}{2}{}^{\circ}/_{\circ}$. But orders have been issued from the Bhola Co-operative Credit Society to increase this rate to $15^{\circ}/_{\circ}$. When the due date of repayment on the part of the debtors has expired, the bank is entitled to realise $18^{\circ}/_{\circ}$.

If the bank is successful it may be authorised to open branches in the neighbouring villages.

The loans advanced up to date by this bank is Rs. 2,962. The debtors are 33 in number. They are, by the way, chiefly the traders of the Bandar. The deposits up to date amount only to Rs. 20 (figures are taken from the books of the D. U. C. Bank).

17. The villagers are not very much given to spending sums with a view to "waste" them. The non-productive expenditure of the village is mainly borne by the Court of Wards Officers. They have subscribed and raised a common fund in order to meet occasional demands. Under the auspices of the C. W. Officers a dramatic club (known as the Daulatkhan Dramatic Club was formed two years ago. Since then three dramas were performed by the club. During Durga Pujah and Kali Pujah festivals two feasts are given by the Estates every year. In the Bazaar there is also an annual feast in which all the Hindus of Daulatkhan are fed. The occasion is the Pujah of Madan-Mohan and the money spent is subscribed by the Marwaris and the people of the Bazaar. Marriages and Sradh ceremonies of the Hindus are rarely celebrated in the village. The majority of the villagers have their own homes and they go there to perform these religious functions. Mahomedan marriages, however, occasionally take place and fairly large sums are generally spent.

During the winter season, cinema companies and circus parties come and pitch their tents in the village. They attract visitors from the surrounding villages and generally remain for about 10 or 15 days during which period they often earn a good sum.

18. 80 per cent. and 10 per cent. of the people pay chowkidari and income taxes respectively.

19. People having incomes of not less than Rs. 200 per annum are liable to this tax. The rate of assessment is 3 as. per Rs. 100 per year. But on an annual income of Rs. 1,000 the tax levied is Rs. 2 per year.

The Chaukidari taxes are collected and spent by the local Union Board (*vide* J-1).

I. *Education.*

1. There are two schools in the village. One of them is a primary school founded by one Mr. T. Lucas, an Armenian domiciled in Amani. This school consists of about 50 students—all children. The other school is the H. E. school maintained by the Court of Wards and aided by the Government. The number of students in this school is about 250.

The majority of the students come from other villages. In our village the number of school-going boys is only about 65. Attached to the school there is a small boarding house. Only 6 boarders live in it at present. There is no school for girls here.

3 & 4. Percentage of adults able to read and write Vernacular is 75 per cent. approximately and that for English is 9 per cent. approximately.

5. I take the criterion of high education to be the Intermediate Examination. In that case our village has got at present 14 highly educated men. This is really a miserable number. Even in the C. W. Office the majority are matriculates: there is a number of non-matriculates too. There are at present only 7 graduates in Daulatkhan; but none of them is a local man.

6. Passing through primary school already referred to, boys generally get themselves admitted in the H. E. school. They are admitted there in Class III (but in the case of boys who had received some English education as well, in Class IV). These boys either continue

their studies in the high school or leave education altogether.

7. There is a fairly big library in the local high school. But its books are lent only to its students and teachers. Among the officers of the Court of Wards there is a religious association. It is known as the *Hari-Sabha.* It meets every Sunday morning when religious songs (*kīrtans*) are sung and extracts from religious and philosophical books are read. There is a similar association among the people of the bazaar who contributed to the making of the "*Akhra*" where an idol of Madanmohan has also been installed by the *Marwaris.* In the C. W. Office quarters there is a Kālī-bāḍi maintained by the Estate. There is a football club among the boys of the C. W. employees, another among the bazaar people and a third of the H. E. School. The Daulatkhan Dramatic Club has already been referred to under the section H-17.

J. Village Administration.

1. There is no Panchayat system in the village. The Union Board is called Bijaypur Union Board (after the name of a flourishing neighbouring village). Six villages come within its jurisdiction. The Board has its office situated in an extremity of the bazaar of Daulatkhan. It has a staff of 16 chaukidars, a daphadar, a clerk, a president (honorary). Part of its duties are construction of roads, clearing of ponds, improving drainage, improvement of health (in the form of disinfection of water by bleaching powder, medicines to cholera patients, etc.), aids to primary schools, etc.

2. An account of the work done during the last five years was not available at the time of the investigation. So

I give the account of the work of one year as indicating the work of an average year.

The year 1334 B. S.		Rs.	A.	P.
Construction of roads (8 roads)	...	375	0	0
Cleaning of ponds (6 ponds) ...	...	55	0	0
Drainage	...	388	0	0
Improvement of health ...	...	57	1	9
Aids to the local primary school	...	108	0	0

The figures are taken from the books of the Union Board Office. The Union Board has not yet received any administrative powers. It may get some shortly.

3. During the year 1927 the number of crimes within Daulatkhan was 4 and from January 1928 up to date (16-11-28) it was also 4. The number of crimes occurring within the whole area of Daulatkhan Police Station is certainly far greater. The most common crime is cattle-theft. Almost every crime relates to property. No crime in Daulatkhan was directed against public tranquillity.

4. About 12 villagers are engaged in litigation and as a consequence 90 per cent. of them have run into debts.

5. Yes, sometimes it is so. Villagers quarrelling with each other come to the Manager of the Court of Wards Office who settles their disputes free of charge. The tenants of the Court of Wards (a great majority of the villagers are so) especially come invariably to the Manager before going to the Police Station.

K. Outlook.

1. Long ago, before the flood of 1283 B. S., when Daulatkhan was a sub-divisional town, it was a place of high tradition. Then the deluge came and everything was gone for the time being. But Daulatkhan has again

risen and has steadily been marching towards economic progress. She has, it seems, already acquired much of her ancient fame and position. She is, of course, no longer the seat of the sub-division, she is instead the headquarters of a group of estates, which yield more than Rs. 2 lakhs a year. She has attained during a very short period a considerable amount of river-borne trade. Within a period of ten years the local bazaar has nearly doubled in size and is still expanding itself more and more in response to strong demand from traders. The number of homesteads in the village has increased with the rather marked increase of population. The habits of villagers have changed; the civilization of the town seems to affect them and articles of conventional necessity are found to be sold in the bazaar. On the whole, Daulatkhan had been in the past, and is also at present attaining economic progress with rather rapid strides.

2. The grave economic disadvantage which the village may have to face in near future may be referred to. This is the rapid deposit of silt in the immediate vicinity of the steamer ghat. Last summer, the water was so shallow that the flat had to be removed a mile down-way—thus causing a great extension of the Steamer Service; and if that is stopped the whole trade of the village will at once come to a standstill. I think it is high time that the matter is taken up by the authorities. If an efficient system of dredging the river is adopted a future danger threatening the village trade may be averted.

Another great improvement might be effected by metalling the existing high roads. This will mean the saving of a lot of trouble which the cartman has to encounter during the rains. Then again the canals—another means of inland transport—are steadily being choked by water-hyacinth. Adequate measures to

remove them are urgently felt. Here lies another opportunity for the reformer.

Now as regards "the possibility of improving village agriculture," there is no scope for extensive cultivation as there is hardly any cultivable land in the village which remains as yet unsettled. Therefore, a system of highly intensive cultivation may be adopted and continued till the fertility of the soil is exhausted and it begins to show signs of the tendency to diminishing returns. But the village-folk are very conservative, and remain satisfied with the fairly good produce yielded by their lands. They are not prepared to adopt any radical or novel means with a view to extracting the maximum of returns from them. The first step towards improving the village agriculture should, in my opinion, be an honest attempt to better the conditions of the cattle. This may be done in two days:

(*a*) by providing adequate grazing grounds; and
(*b*) by bringing in strong bulls for good breeding.

Another improvement would be to impart verbal instruction and to demonstrate practical results to the illiterate peasants (*vide* E-10).

Advance of loans to poor farmers may also in some cases lead to agricultural improvement.

DAULATKHAN:
17th November, 1928.

NARKILA (SYLHET)

By Kushi Mohan Das—IV-Year.

Introduction.

Narkila is a small village in the district of Sylhet. It is situated in the sub-division Sunamganj, under the jurisdiction of the Sunamganj Police Station, near Pagla Pargana. The village is at a distance of about 8 miles to the south of Sunamganj, the head-quarter town of the sub-division, and is about 4½ miles to the north-west of the village Pagla, after which the Pargana has been named. Though the village is in the province of Assam, it may be regarded as a Bengal village for reasons more than one. The inhabitants of the village, as also the inhabitants of the district, are cent per cent Bengalis. All the inhabitants of the district of Sylhet speak Bengali. The village is situated in the plain on the bank of a very small rivulet, Chirka, which shrinks within its bed even towards the early part of December. The decline of the river has been caused by the great earthquake of 1304 B. S. The nearest railway line is 45 miles off from the village and the Sylhet Ghat is the nearest Railway Station. During the rains the village excepting the homesteads almost entirely goes under water and it becomes physically impossible to go from one *Para* to another without the help of a boat. The river Surma from which the valley receives its name is at a distance of 1 mile from the village. The well-known Khasi Hills are situated to the north of the sub-division of Sunamganj and the range, being at a distance of not more than 14 miles, can be seen from the village as a blue vertical sheet which bounds our vision to the north. In the rains, the hill-ranges, sometimes overcast with

patches of clouds and sometimes deep blue in colour with the shining brooks running down over their body, present a most impressive spectacle to the villagers.

A. Population.

The village has a population of 186. The number has slightly increased since the last census and the present total population stands at this figure. The inhabitants are all Hindus and, therefore, there is hardly any communal strife in the village. The inhabitants are divided into four sub-castes, the Kayasthas, Mahishyas, Barbers and the Namasudras, of which the Kayasthas and the Mahishyas wield the greatest influence. There is only one family of barbers and they have come from a distant village and set up a semi-permanent abode in the village. It has been mentioned that the longevity of the Indian in general is decreasing day by day and the village under review is not an exception to that statement. Here the average life of a villager is 30 years. The oldest lady of the village who recently passed away was 85 years of age. It is, however, an exceptional case. There are on the average two deaths (adult) per year and five births, but out of these 5 new born babes, almost 2·5 on an average make their exit just after birth. Whenever a baby is born it is born in the most unfavourable circumstances in a room which is both dark and damp. It is a belief among the women of the village that if the lying-in-room be ventilated and made accessible to light, the room will be haunted by ghosts and the life of the new-comer will be in danger. The lying-in room is regarded as the most impure in the house and it is in this damp impure dungeon that our young angels first see the light. The village under review is still steeped in such superstitious beliefs. There is no way out of it unless the women in the village are given a fair share of education. There are

41 families in the village, but some of them do not contain any male member or adult male members and there are other families consisting of just the married couple. The families of the last description are, generally separated from joint families. It is, however, a matter of daily occurrence that brothers often fall out and divide their property with the help of the village chiefs, and happily again, some are re-united through the sincere efforts of the villagers. In almost every three families out of five, there is a widow or two. These widows having met their fate have returned to their fathers' houses and live there as parasites. They never add to the income of the house, but rather form a drag to the healthful progress of the family as of the village. It is not infrequently seen that the legal separation of many joint families is brought about by the zeal of these widows. But small or big, with male members to support them or not, there are 41 families in the village occupying 26 homesteads. 15 out of these 41 families do not possess any children and as regards the remaining 25 families, the number of children varies from 1 to 6.

Taking the previous 5 years, it may be stated that the death of children of above 2 years of age is a rare case and the number of such deaths may be counted on the fingers. Within the period of five years alluded to, one boy of seven and two girls of five, died, the boy of Cholera and the girls of indigestion and diarrhoea. The infant mortality is appalling. Mothers often give birth to dead children and some babies die just after birth and some again meet the fatal hour a few days later. In the year 1334 B.S. the months of *Paush*, *Magh*, *Phalgun* and *Chaitra* saw the simultaneous birth and death of not less than five babies. Village folk are really very careless about the health of the new-born babies and that of the mothers. Except one I hardly

remember a case in which any doctor or a midwife was called in, even when the condition was precarious. The case which I exclude from the lot has not also proved itself to be a happy one. At the eleventh hour when there was evidently an apprehension of the loss of life of the woman she was taken to the dispensary where a dead baby was given birth to with the help of the doctors; and the mother is still suffering from uterus troubles. In the month of *Sravana*, there was another case in which after nine days of the birth of a baby the woman died, the baby soon following its mother.

The following statistical account shows the total population of the village as it stands at present :—

Men	... 68			Kayastha ...	38
Women	... 57			Mahishya ...	130
Children	... 61	Male	... 38	Namasudra...	16
		Female	... 23	Barber ...	2
TOTAL	... 186			TOTAL ...	186

As regards the age of marriage for boys and girls in the various communities, it varies from seven to fourteen. There is a very evil practice among the Namasudras. A young man of about 32 years of age often marries a girl of 7 or 8. Of course there are cases in which girls of 10 or 12 are married to men of 35 or 40. But girls of above 12 are seldom seen unmarried in the Namasudra community. Among the Mahishyas, the average age of girls for marriage is 13 while the average age of men for marriage is 28, while among the Kayasthas the average ages of females and males for marriage are 11 and 25 respectively. The Kayasthas and Mahishyas live together in the same *Para* and the barbers are also amongst them but the Namasudras have taken up their abode in one extremity of the village and the portion of the village which they occupy has been cut apart from the rest of the village by a small canal.

There is no communal strife amongst the different sub-castes in the village. But the villagers have some petty quarrels with the Musalmans who put up in a village not more than half a mile off from the village. These are, however, petty quarrels and only once in my memory was there a regular fight between the members of the two villages, but that was not owing to any religious difference. The quarrel was about some land which lies just near our village but which belongs to the inhabitants of the other village. Though several persons had been wounded, the dispute was settled by arbitration and neither party sought the help of the law-court.

B. Sanitary Conditions of the Village.

The sanitary conditions of the village are far from satisfactory. Among the various diseases that enfeeble the inhabitants of the village malaria is the most prevalent in the village. Just after the rains set in, the disease attacks with all its virulence. Once attacked, the patient is rendered unfit for his work for a whole year. The prevalence of malaria in the village for the last two years has not been so intense as it was during the previous years. Malaria carries on its work in full swing from the month of June to the month of October; one peculiarity is, however, observed that the people do not, or very seldom, die of the disease. Cholera, small-pox, kala-azar and such other diseases, though not very common, are by no means scarce. Cholera and small-pox have not, for the last ten years, been of a virulent type. Four years back two members of the same family died of Cholera, one a boy of seven and the other a very old man. In the year 1911, however, Cholera broke out in the village with all its severity and almost every family in the village was the loser of at least one soul. There were

families, however, which became well-nigh extinct as a result of the terrible epidemic. There are cases of chicken-pox in the village almost every year, but small-pox is very rare, indeed, negligibly scarce.

During the years 1924-26, there were altogether 10 cases of kala-azar, but, fortunately for the villagers, there is no new case at present. There was no instance of the disease last year also. The disease has been eradicated, practically speaking, by the kala-azar doctor specially appointed to meet the situation. The dispensary is running yet as there are persons suffering from kala-azar in the neighbouring villages. Tuberculosis is absent.

As regards medical assistance within the reach of the villagers it is really meagre. During the first stage of the disease nobody calls in a doctor or ever feels any necessity for doing so. He remains pretty confident that the disease will be cured of itself. I have seen persons suffering from fever for months together but still they do not call in any medical man. In case of ordinary fever and malaria no villager takes any other medicine than the patent *Sudhasamudra* and the *Chandmarka pachan*. When these two fail *Edward's Tonic* gets a trial and, in case of its being unsuccessful, the Kaviraj is sent for. This Kaviraj had never entered the threshold of any *Ayurvedic* institution, but the villagers, however, have unfailing faith in him. There are some families, of course, very few in number, who avail themselves of the help of the Sub-Assistant Surgeon in charge of the Kala-azar Dispensary, which is about half a mile from the village. I have observed a change in the village; the faith of the villagers is being turned from the above-mentioned Kaviraj to allopathic treatment. Diarrhoea is very prevalent in the village and it develops into a serious type in the rainy season. The reason is not far to seek.

During the rains the villagers do not use drinking water from the reserved tank which is, unfortunately, not within easy reach of all. They drink the water of the river Chirka already referred to, and this water is at the root of such a wide prevalence of diarrhoea. The Kaviraj, prescribes *Aqua Ptychotis* which cures almost 70 per cent. of the patients.

Those who cannot afford to call in the Sub-Assistant Surgeon—I mean the kala-azar doctor—on payment of regular visiting fees, go to the Sunamganj Charitable Dispensary to meet emergency cases, but such cases are infrequent.

The villagers, with the exception of 3 or 4 Kayastha families and 2 or 3 Mahishya families, are not very clean in their habits. They put on very dirty clothes and they stick to them except on the three or four Sankranti days of the year, as for instance—the last day of the month of *Paush*, *Jyaistha*, and *Sravana*. When they go out to other villages to see their relatives, they get their clothes washed by the women of their respective families. Even a couple of years back I have seen them using ashes to serve the purpose of Soda, but in these days it is seldom used. Soda and soap have taken its place. Many of the villagers use dirty "*Kanthas*" at night in their beds. They are generally too poor to use quilt or mattresses. The members of the Namasudra community are specially very untidy in their habits. Their clothes are as dirty as possible and a sort of bad smell probably of fish (for they catch fish and live on it) always issues from their persons.

There are six tanks besides the reserved one in the village. These six tanks do not provide the villagers with drinking water; their water is used for domestic purposes such as washing and scouring. These tanks abound in

fishes of various descriptions and the village boys often catch them by means of hooks. The reserved tanks—the tank excavated with the help of the Local Board—is situated at some distance from the village : it was excavated three years back. It had been sanctioned by the Local Board through the untiring efforts of a noblehearted educated youth who is no more. The villagers are not allowed to bathe or wash their cloths in the reserved tank but in the rains the water of the small river Chirka is used as drinking water, the villagers do not hesitate to wash themselves in the same stream. But as it is running water, not much harm is done. Before the excavation of this tank diarrhoea and dysentery were constant factors in the village but now they are seen only in the rains. The condition of the drainage system in the village is as unsatisfactory as anything ; indeed it is bad beyond description. In the months of *Kartik*, *Baisakh* (*i.e.*, latter part of October and first part of November; and the latter part of April and first part of May), and *Jyaistha*, the several streets of the village become simply impassable, the mud therein being waist-deep. About eight years ago, an attempt was made to have a good drainage by excavating a shallow canal joining the streets to the open fields which is at a lower level than the village, but the condition has not improved. There are stagnant pools which breed mosquitoes and which harbour snakes. The mosquitoes are so abundant that it is quite impossible to sleep without curtain for eight months in the year. Snake-bite is a matter of almost daily occurrence during the rainy season but it does not prove to be dangerous. The *Ojhas* always succeed in getting down the poison by the chanting of *mantras* but belief in the potent power of these *mantras* is not universal. In the year 1927, a young man of the age of 22 died of snake-bite, leaving a widow of 12 behind. No *Ojha* could cure the man.

During the rains, snakes are often found on the yards of the houses.

The housing condition of the village is not satisfactory. The villagers are, on the average, very poor and cannot afford to build houses other than the thatched cottages which constitute more than 96 per cent. of the houses in the village. There are ten houses with roofs of corrugated iron and about 120 thatched ones. The thatched cottages are, however, pretty high, but they lack in good ventilation. Sufficient air and light cannot make their entrance into all the houses ; this state of affairs, beyond any shade of doubt, tells upon the health of the people.

C. Land.

The people of the village are mostly agricultural, but with the exception of two or three families, the villagers do not own any land. They cultivate lands which have been let out to them by the Zemindars who are two in number. These Zemindars do not, however, reside in the village itself. The area of the cultivated land is not less than 69 *Hals* or 828 '*Kedars.*' The land is, in our part of the country, measured in terms of *Kedars* and *Hals*, one *Kedar* being equal to about $1\frac{1}{4}$ *Bighas.* The area of fallow land is not less than 150 *Bighas* which, however, is used as the pasturage. Cows graze on this area in the dry season and grass that grows in the pasturage during the rains, is mowed and given to the cattle. The area of jungles is 150 *Bighas* of which 50 *Bighas* have been left untouched while 40 *Bighas* are being utilised for the production of straw. Trees have been grown on the remaining 60 Bighas which give shade to the cattle in the hot month of April, May and June. These trees also provide fuels to be used on *Barwari*

festivals. Just in the middle of the pasturage, there is a tank which supplies drinking water to the cattle. No irrigation is required for the *Aman* crop which is harvested in the month of *Agrahayan* and the seeds of which are sown in the months of *Baisakh* and *Jyaistha*. For the sowing of the seeds, the rain-water is sufficient. But irrigation of some sort is very necessary for the *Shali Bora* crop which is harvested in the month of *Baisakh*. There is an area of 35 *Bighas* of land which is tilled for the growing of *Shali Bora* crop and which is used as a tank from which water is drawn and directed to the upper lands, which besides the 35 *Bighas* just referred to, are used for raising the same crop. The 35 *Bighas* of land are very deep on which about 12 cubits of water stand during the rains. In the case of *Shali Bora* crop, transplantation of seedlings is required. In the month of *Kartik* a small plot of land is cultivated very carefully so that the mud stands there 6 inches deep. It is fenced around preventing the cattle from injuring the young plants. When these plants are a cubit high they are transplanted on a larger land which is separately tilled for the purpose. This work of transplantation is done in the month of *Paush* and *Magh*. The land on which the seedlings are transplanted require watering. To meet this purpose water is raised from the above-mentioned area of 35 *Bighas* with the help of "*Kond*" (the local name for a sort of *dingi* made out of a single big tree). Besides this source of water, there are also two *Bils* or natural tanks in the vicinity of the rice-field which stands in need of watering. But for these three sources of water supply it would have been impossible to grow rice in the fields, because there is nothing of irrigation works, and no other arrangements have been made by the Zemindars themselves.

The selling price of land varies from Rs. 100 to Rs. 250 per *Kedar*: but the farmers who cultivate lands let out by the Zemindars to them, are not entitled to sell their lands; they can enjoy the lands allotted to them, so long as they pay regularly the annual rent and so long as they do not incur the displeasure of the Zemindars. The mortgaging of such lands is also not allowed by the Zemindars, but the rayats borrow money from the village money-lenders by giving away their lands privately on mortgage to the latter, though the rayats themselves are to pay the rent to the Zemindar as usual so as to hide the transaction from him. The rate of such secret mortgaging of one *Kedar* of land varies from Rs. 25 to Rs. 50. The average area of land held by a family (of course including the rayats) is something like 12 *Kedars.*

D. It has been previously mentioned that the people of the village are mostly agricultural and with the exception of 2 or 3 Kayastha families, all the inhabitants of the village cultivate lands, some cultivating their own lands and some cultivating lands which they manage to secure from other cultivators of the Kayastha families on some sort of understanding between the two parties. By 'their own lands' I mean the lands which have been let out to them by the Zemindars.

There are three families which own land but do not cultivate it themselves. Of the 41 families of the village, almost all of them have some lands at least in their possession, some actually owning and securing them on lease; but the lands are unequally distributed. There are farmers who can hardly make both ends meet by the produce of their own land, while there are others who sell every year paddy worth about Rs. 1,000.

There are some widows in the village who have none to support them and are left with a few *Bighas* of land. These lands are let out on the *Bagi* system. The *Bagi*

system most probably resembles the *Barga* system which is in practice in Eastern Bengal. The land is let to a farmer on the understanding that he will, with his oxen and implements, cultivate the land and that he will have to give the owner of the land half of the corn after harvesting. Sometimes, the owner of the land provides the *Bhagidar* with half the seeds required.

• But there are widows again who neither have any house to live in nor any piece of land to support them. They, however, serve in other families in exchange for food and clothing. There are farmers who in addition to their own land, manage to get some more land on *Bhagi* from their neighbours, who themselves cannot cultivate all the lands they possess.

Apart from the *Bhagi* system there is in vogue another practice of letting out lands in the village. A farmer may cultivate some land belonging to another on the condition that he must give after the harvest time a specified amount of paddy to the owner. This he must pay whether the land yields any crops or not. This system is called, letting out on *Chokjama*. A *Kedar* of land usually yields 8 mds. of paddy, but if it is let on *Chokjama* this fetches from 2½ mds. to 3 mds. of paddy from the man who cultivates the land. This system is widely adopted but the condition of the poor farmers when the crop fails is simply unimaginable. Whether they starve or not they have to pay the *Chokjama*. This system has often had recourse to by the Zemindars. In almost all the fields, the Zemindars have a considerable portion of the total land which is let out to the farmers in *Chokjama*. It is also interesting to note that in order to get such lands on *Chokjama* the farmer has in addition to the specified amount of *Chokjama* to pay a certain sum, say Rs. 10 per *Kedar* to the Zemindar as *Nazar*.

The rent per *Kedar* which is paid to the Zemindar varies from half-a-rupee to Rs. 4. If a farmer dies leaving his widow and some minor children behind him without any adult member to look after them, some lands which originally belonged to the farmer are confiscated by the Zemindar on the consideration that there is none in the family to cultivate so much land as the family has in its possession. The Zemindar, however, lets out the confiscated land to other farmers who might, perhaps, have previously tempted him with a big *Nazar*. This practice has led to the seriously unequal distribution of lands among the rayats and the poor amongst them are the worst victims to this practice.

E. Agriculture.

The principal crop of the village is rice. It may be deemed to be the only crop of the village. The cultivation of jute has not yet found much favour in the district of Sylhet as it has in Eastern Bengal.

Rice, when normal condition prevails, sells at 8 seers a rupee but sometimes in the months of *Chaitra, Aswin* and *Kartick*, it sells at less than 5 seers a rupee. The normal price of paddy is Rs. 3 or Rs. 3-8 per maund. The price per maund of jute varies from Rs. 10 to 20. The cultivation of jute has very much increased within these two years and some Marwarees have set up big marts in the market-places where people go to make purchases. The volume of transactions in jute is not, however, at present, very significant but the Marwarees anticipate a large profit in the business in the near future.

All the lands of the village are one-crop-yielding. In case of *Shali-Bora-Dhan,* the work begins at the end of the month of *Kartick* and harvesting is over by the last week of *Baishakh.* During the rains, they all go under water which stands about ten or twelve cubits high.

The water does not subside till late in the month of *Kartick*. As regards the *Aman* crop, the seeds are sown in the month of *Chaitra*, *Baishakh* or *Jyaistha* and, during the rains, the plants swing up along with the increase of water till at last they grow up to be 6 or 7 cubits long. The harvesting is over by the beginning of *Poush*. So it can be easily seen that the lands are occupied for the most part of the year and, therefore, they cannot yield more than one crop. But the land on which *Aman* crop is raised, is sometimes utilised for growing *Tishi* (linseed), *Dhania* (coriander seed), and *Sharisha* (mustard). But all the lands cannot be utilised for this purpose.

It is not infrequently seen that the incessant rains destroy the *Aman* crops. In such cases the young plants which have been previously sown (perhaps a month back) are transplanted in another field in the month of *Bhadra* and *Aswin* and the crop ripens in the month of *Agrahayan* ; but this is possible only in lands situated on a somewhat higher level. On such lands the farmer can raise *Ashudhan* also, which is harvested, in the month of *Sravan* and thus they may be made to yield two crops a year, but such lands are not sufficient and the farmers themselves are an ease-loving people who are generally averse to taking additional trouble.

The farmers use for agricultural purposes the simple implements such as *Langal*, *Joal* and *Mai*. By means of the *Joal* two oxen are yoked together and the *Langal* tills the ground after which the *Mai* harrows the land to smooth it. The *Langal* is too familiar an agricultural implement to be described and the *Joal* is nothing but a piece of bamboo or wood with two vertical pieces of wood near its two extremities, to the lower end of which strings are fastened by means of which the oxen are yoked to the *Joal*. In cultivation, the villagers use oxen. Never, perhaps, within

living memory of the village, had any buffalo been used for the purpose, nor even had any buffalo been reared in the village for the sake of milk. *Jhara-ghas*, *Durba-ghas* and *Chalia-ghas* and dry straw that is left after paddy has been threshed, are the principal fodder for cattle. There was and still is, as mentioned previously, a common pasturage for each half of the village. There has been two herds of cattle in the village in the dry season, for the convenience of tending and the total pasturage has been divided into two portions to meet the demand. During the rains, the cattle are provided with grass at home. The food is given thrice, one of which is the straw that is stocked at the harvest time for the purpose. But towards the end of the rainy season owing to the scarcity of grass, the cattle are very much emaciated and some of them cannot survive the starvation. Their condition is aggravated, however, when they are let loose just at the end of the rainy season, because with their body emaciated and strength lessened, they are to wade through the pool of mud in the village streets (*Goptas* as they are called). The condition of cattle improves from the month of *Agrahayan* to the month of *Baishakh*.

The villagers breed their own cattle. They do not attach much importance to the breeding of the cattle. When a cow calves, the young one is allowed to take its mother's milk for a whole month without restraint, after which milk is taken from the cow. The young calves are kept in a separate compartment but they are not often bound. They are not allowed to accompany their mothers even when milk is not taken from them. The shed for cattle is always kept neat and clean though the villagers themselves have insanitary habits. A sort of mat which is specially made with reeds, is given to the cattle to sleep on at night. These mats are, every day, cleaned

and dried in the sun. The villagers purchase oxen and cows from the weekly markets. A good ox can be had for Rs. 50 or Rs. 60, and a good milch cow can be purchased for Rs. 45.

The villagers are not accustomed to using any kind of manure in the rice field. They maintain that the fertility of the rice fields cannot be increased by means of manure and at the same time they hold that the idea of manuring a field cannot be put into execution. But sometimes in the cultivation of jute, they use cowdung as manure. The fields which yield *Shali-Bora-Dhan* do not require much manure. They are connected with the river Surma by means of some canals which during the rainy season bring down ample silt from the river to the fields and thus to some extent, increases their fertility.

There has not been any innovation in the process of cultivation. It has been and will for some time to come be a stereotyped affair to the villagers who do not seem to think that there might be any scope for any new method being introduced into the process of cultivation. The process which was adopted a century ago is still being continued. The Agricultural and Veterinary Departments have not been of much help in the improvement of the agricultural conditions of the village ; and our village has not succeeded in attracting their notice. Of course, there is a laxity among the villagers themselves. They do not like to have any external help in matters relating to agriculture.

As regards the cost of cultivation per *Kedar*, it varies from Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 excluding the remuneration for the farmer himself ; but this cost includes the hire of the oxen. About 75 per cent. of the cultivators work with their own ploughs or bullocks and 20 per cent. of them cultivate their lands with bullocks and ploughs belonging to others in exchange for their personal service to them.

For instance, a farmer has two additional bullocks while one of the neighbours has none. The latter may be allowed to avail himself of the use of the two bullocks of his neighbours on the condition that out of every three days he will have to cultivate the land of the owner of the oxen for two days and his own land for only one day. This practice is followed and farmers think it more profitable than the actual hiring of the oxen. Those only who cannot afford to purchase their own oxen, have recourse to this method. Five per cent. of the cultivators, however, hire oxen and plough for the cultivation of their lands. The rate of hire per ox per year varies from 6 to 8 mds. of paddy. This hire is always paid in kind and never in money. The hire includes, however, the hire of the ploughs. Ploughs are often of course lent to the neighbours *gratis*.

F. Village Industries.

There are few industries in the village. The people of the village mostly engage themselves in agricultural work and do not think it worth their while engaging in any type of cottage industries. They sleep away their leisure hours, but would not put themselves to any such work. They have got ample leisure from the month of *Jyaistha* to the month of *Aswin*, but they spend their time in sleeping and gossiping. All the farmers make baskets, mats, and *hachu* (the local name of a fishing contrivance) for their own use. They never purchase these things from the market. In short, they make everything they require, but do not make anything for sale. There are some needy farmers in the village who make baskets and mats for sale but they carry on such business on so small a scale that it should not be regarded as an industry. The sale of these articles, however, is confined within

the village as the farmers think it beneath their dignity to carry on their own shoulders the articles they make. There are two or three young men in the village who can make *Shitalpati* but with the exception of one of them they never make use of their dexterity in the art which as a consequence is falling into disuse day by day. One of them occasionally sets himself to the work and makes *patis*—some for the use of his family and some for sale. The price of each *pati* varies from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4-8 as. It really pains one to think that such a profitable industry is on the decline for want of proper interest and care.

There are four persons in the village who are well-versed in carpentry, though they are not carpenters by birth. One of them is regularly at work and earns his living by making boats, chairs, doors, tables, and various other things. Two of the four occasionally work and earn their living by making and repairing fashionable goods, but they generally make goods for their own use and they look upon it as a subsidiary profession. But the remaining one of the four has given up the pursuit of the industry altogether. Even four years back this man used to earn not less than Rs. 100 a month by making boats, *dingis*, etc.

It is a curious thing to note that women of the Mahishya and Namasudra communities earn not less than Rs. 20 per head in the course of the few months from *Poush* to *Jyaistha*. Almost all the families have a plot of land adjoining their respective houses which is devoted to gardening. The male members fence and plough it for the women and with the performance of these two tasks their duty is over. The women grow brinjals, pepper, tobacco, pumpkins, etc., on this plot of land. The brinjals, potatoes and pumpkins constitute excellent vegetables, and tobacco and pepper are dried and

preserved carefully to be used throughout the year. The requirements of some families are satisfied with the fruits of their industry at home and they seldom purchase pepper and tobacco from the market. Sometimes some women sell a portion of the last two articles and thus add to their personal income. There is one woman in the village who is an adept in spinning. She can spin thread the counts of which vary from 16 to 35. But she spins, however, to satisfy her own caprices and never sells the thread spun by her. This is all that can be said of the village industry.

G. Trade.

The village trade is not at all brisk. The village is situated in an out-of-the-way place and with hardly any good communication connecting it with any important centre of trade. There are a few small shops in the village, one of which is the grocer's shop. Of all the shops the grocer's is the most brisk. There are, besides, three other shops dealing in stationery and other articles of daily consumption. Among the village products the only thing that is offered for sale in a considerably large amount is paddy. Jute comes next in order of importance but the total output of jute is only a small fraction of paddy. Every year the whole village sells paddy to the extent of Rs. 6,000 though it is not to be supposed that all the families of the village can afford to sell it. Some of them can hardly make both ends meet and actually incur debt to maintain themselves. But there are a few families who have a surplus for sale. The transactions are carried on in the village itself. Boats from some parts of Bengal and some parts of the district of Sylhet itself go to the village in the rainy season for the movement of the *Shali-Bora-Dhan* that had been harvested

in the month of *Baisakh*. The trade begins in the month of *Asharh* and comes to an end in the month of *Aswin*. Again, in the month of *Poush*, the *Aman-dhan* is offered for sale but now the boats cannot reach the village as the river Chirka gets partly dried up. They remain, however, at a distance of three quarters of a mile from the village on the river Surma. Paddy is carried on shoulders or on the back of the oxen from the village to the boats on the river. Almost all transactions are carried by means of boats on the rivers.

There are no good roads and the nearest railway line, as has been already mentioned, is at a distance of 45 miles. The village is not in any way connected with any important centre of trade. When the people are in need of clothes, oil, and other articles they go to the market, the nearest one being 2½ miles off, with some rice that is husked by the female members of the house. They sell the rice at the market and with money thus procured make necessary purchases. The village grocer often charges a high price for his articles and his weights are also not above suspicion. These causes combine with others in inducing the villagers to go to the market to make purchases of the articles that are very necessary for daily use. But there are some who purchase things on credit and therefore the grocer has a busy time of it.

There is another petty, but not negligible, trade in the village. Ghee can be found in the village in sufficient quatity in the months of *Baisakh* and *Jyaistha*, and ghee is sold in the village almost daily. The selling of this article is, however, in charge of women who are very fond of purchasing brass-utensils with the proceeds secured by the sale of ghee. In the rainy season, the Namasudras export fish which they cannot sell in the village. *Shingi* fish (or scorpion fish) is a case in point.

H. General Economic Condition of the Village.

All the inhabitants of the village depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Some persons follow subsidiary occupations but without agriculture they will have to starve. Two persons of the village have shops in the neighbouring market. Even they cannot maintain their respective families without agricultural pursuit. There is, in fact, only one man in the village—the carpenter—who can maintain his family by his profession. There is not, with this exception, a single family which depends for its livelihood on cottage industry. Narkila can flatter itself that there is nobody who lives on charity or begging. There are only four or five field labourers. When off their duty they work in the lands of others and in exchange receive payment in money. By the term "field labourers," I have meant only those who work in others' lands in exchange for payment. All the cultivators with the members of their families, of course, work in the field. The members of Namasudra community often sell out their services as *Palki*-bearers. Therefore, in the month of *Phalgun*, when marriages are frequent they have a very busy time of it and earn a considerable amount in that month.

The barber has a very busy occupation. There are only two barbers in one family in the village; and the surrounding five or six villages avail themselves of their services. They do not receive their wages in money. At the time of marriages and *Sraddha* ceremonyies they get presents of cloths, money, rice, *dāl*, etc. But these are extra payments. The regular wages they receive from the villagers are in the shape of paddy and they realise about 13⅓ seers of paddy (2 *Puras* of the locality) per every adult member annually. This sort of payment brings considerable profit to the barbers

themselves and the villagers on their part think it easier to pay the barber in corn than in money.

There are no washermen in the village and the want is keenly felt by the villagers. When occasion requires, they have their cloths washed by the washermen of Sunamgunj, the headquarter town of the sub-division. But the necessity is not generally felt.

Very few members of the village live out of it, for a large part of the year, to earn their living. Two only are earning their livelihood by service but they do not serve the Government. They are serving in different businesses drawing petty salaries. Only one keeps out of the village for the greater part of the year in the pursuit of a profitable business and earns more than a hundred rupees a month. The former two gentlemen living not very far from the village, often visit their homes.

The educational activities in the village are negligible. There is not a single graduate in the village, no pleader and no civil servant. The people are illiterate and ignorant to a degree. There are only two teachers at present in the village, one of them being an undergraduate and serving as the headmaster of a newly established M.E. School which is not very far from the village, and the other being the Pandit of the village L. P. School. The villagers with few exceptions are a home-loving people and do not like to stir out of their houses in search of employment in cities. Moreover, they prefer agriculture at home to any other employment in cities. In the whole district of Sylhet, there are but two or three factories each of which is 100 miles off from the village and the villagers do not think it worth their while to go to these factories as factory labourers. The villagers have a peculiar belief that if they stir out of their homes in search of employment the Goddess of Wealth becomes displeased and soon leaves them to their fate. So partly

through fear and partly through love for home, the villagers throughout the year keep at home.

When during the rains, the cultivator is out of agricultural work, he sets himself to working out the minor occupations such as making baskets, mats, agricultural implements such as *Langal*, *Joal* and *Mai* and such other articles as he will require in the busy season. When the condition of agriculture is normal, the cultivator has no anxiety for his living and spends most of his spare time in smoking hubble-bubble, in playing at cards and such other amusements, and in affairs of household management. They seldom follow any subsidiary profession but they simply look up to God for help and meet their needs by borrowing money from the money-lenders or the Zemindars at high interest. This is one of the principal causes of the ruin of the village folk. They do not know how to meet emergency cases and they are so out of date in comparison with the progress of the outside world that they do nothing else in case the crops fail or on pinch of starvation, than to borrow money at such a high interest as the money-lender thinks it expedient to charge.

The current price of rice which forms the staple food of the villagers varies from Rs. 4-8 to Rs. 5 only per maund ; rice is to be considered cheap at this price. There are persons, probably five in number, who can and do make savings out of the money which they procure by selling the surplus paddy but none of the villagers have any bank account. No villager can understand the utility of opening bank accounts and the idea is too new to be appreciated by them. They often hoard money and sometimes lend it to the needy at higher interest than can be paid by the majority of the borrowers. Of the 41 families of the village there are not less than 30 families that are in debt and the amount

of debt varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 1,000. It is necessary to mention that only one family is in debt to the extent of Rs. 1,000 and another to the extent of Rs. 700. Three families have debt to the extent of Rs. 500. People often borrow money at the time of *Sraddha* and marriage ceremonies. Most of the villagers have no means of enjoying so much during these ceremonies, but notwithstanding their lack of means they spend lavishly and observe costly formalities. There are five *mahajans* in the village. They generally do not know how to read and write but still they carry on money-lending business on a large scale. There are a few widows already referred to, who lend petty sums of money to the poor villagers and often charge an interest of As. 2 per rupee per month. The rate of interest, the money-lender charges varies from 3½ to 12 per cent. One peculiarity is that the poorer the debtor the heavier the percentage of interest that has to be paid by him. Some villagers often borrow money from professional money-lenders at Sunamgunj, the rate of interest being a little lower. I have seen poor villagers giving their all only to meet the payment of interest while the principal remains as it is. It is a matter of usual occurrence that interest often becomes four or five times the capital and when the debtor prays to the money-lender for some sort of clemency, he relents and says: 'I may give up the capital itself but not the interest.' But at the time of payment he sees that both the capital and the interest are realised to the pie.

There is another serious practice of lending money. In the month of *Chaitra* and *Kartick* when the poor men have nothing to eat, they borrow sums of money on the condition that in the next month after the harvest time they will have to pay off the money with an interest of 6½ seers of paddy (one *Pura*, the price being approximately

As. 8) per rupee. So on calculation the rate of interest works out to 50%. The situation is made worse by the fact that the peasants cannot sell away their lands in payment of their debts nor can they openly get money by giving their lands on mortgage. The Zemindars stand in the way and it is often seen that when the poor villager is over head and ears in debt, the Zemindar snatches away the piece of land at the disposal of the peasant.

Lending paddy is also another important transaction carried on by the somewhat wealthier section of the inhabitants of the village. The phenomenon of paddy-lending is an interesting affair and amply proves the depth and nakedness of poverty which some of the villagers are in. When the poor creatures are on the point of starvation,—the peak is reached a few weeks before the harvest time—they borrow paddy from their wealthy neighbours—generally those heartless money-lenders—so that after three or four weeks they are required to pay often 100% interest and sometimes 75% but never below 50%. The interest, of course, is paid in paddy. There are 7 families out of 41 who borrow corn in this way almost every year. Two families can never repay wholly what they borrow and they have still about fifty maunds of paddy to pay to the *mahajans*.

During the *Sraddha* ceremonies and marriages, they are forced by custom and usage to spend what they really cannot afford to spend. The Mahishyas and Namasudras in order to keep up their dignity marry their sons to the daughters of those who are superior to them in status and the *pan* which has to be paid for each bride often varies from Rs. 100 to 500. Though poor, a villager must pay that *pan*, if not from his savings, by borrowing the sum in order to preserve the so-called dignity of his house. This is the whole history of the borrowing transactions that are carried on in the village.

About 90 per cent. of the people pay Chowkidari taxes, but none have yet to pay any income-tax. There are three families who, if their income is known, would have been required to pay income-tax and two families, it is heard, have already been reported against. Most probably these two families will be charged to pay the tax from the next year. There is no fixed principle of assessment in Chowkidari taxes. But generally the progression theory is had recourse to. The wealthier a person, the heavier the tax he has to pay. The principle mentioned is not, however, rigid and binding. The Sarpanch often lays down the amount that each villager has to pay by guessing, keeping an eye on the general condition of the people.

I. Education.

The educational progress of the village is almost negative. Indeed, the condition is unsatisfactory to an overwhelming degree. There is a superstitious belief among the cultivators of the village that the welfare of the family is quite inconsistent with education. There is only one Lower Primary School in the village and this too has been established not long ago. The present writer remembers how, when a boy, in the absence of any school in the village, he had to go to a neighbouring village a mile distant from this village for primary education. Having finished the L.P. course, the boys may go to Govindapur M E. School for the Minor course. This school was established last year. It is about a mile off from the village and boys do not find any difficulty to go there on foot during the dry season. During the rains, however, they have to set up their abode in the village Kathair which is just close to the village Govindapur.

There are 30 school-going boys and girls, three of whom are reading in the Middle English School, and the

remaining 27 go to the Lower Primary School of the village to receive primary education. Of these 27, 8 are girls and 19 are boys. About 8 per cent. of the adults are able to read and write vernacular but the percentage of English-knowing persons is negligible. Only five men of the village know how to read and write English. The number of highly educated men in the village is *nil*. Only one young man is studying for his B.A. course and will go in for his final examination this year.

There is a small library in the present writer's house, which has about 300 Bengali books and 200 English books, mainly fiction. The English books are very seldom taken out of the library but the Bengali books are often read by a few of the villagers and some gentlemen of the neighbouring villages.

J. Village Administration.

The work of the village administration is a tame affair. The existence of the Union Board is never felt and the Panchayat system is also defective. The Chowkidar, though called the village Chowkidar, is not an inhabitant of the village and he is very seldom seen in the village. He pays his visit to the village only four or five times during the whole of the year. At the time of realising the Chowkidari tax, the Chowkidar accompanies the Sarpanch ; and at times, he comes to the village to take the number of births and deaths.

The nature of crimes committed in the village is not serious. Sometimes it is pilfering, sometimes it is a quarrel about the boundary of two houses or about the possession of a mango tree or bamboo grove.

The disputes are often settled by arbitration and the settlement is accomplished by the members of the village Panchayat. Though full justice is not always administered

to the parties concerned by the members of the Panchayat, no clamour is raised. Sometimes the parties involved in the quarrel approach the Zemindars for the settlement of their disputes and the Zemindar, for a trifling offence, imposes a fine on the culprit. The fine of course goes into the purse of the Zemindar. Nobody in the village is in debt in consequence of litigation. During the last *Jyaistha*, however, a singular instance of litigation cropped up in the village. A quarrel ensued between two men about a pile of straw which resulted in a regular fight in which one of the two was slightly wounded. The case was instituted but after some time, it was settled by arbitration outside the court.

K. Outlook.

A great deal of work will have to be done to improve the village agriculture. The first thing is to construct a great dam across the *Shali-Bora* field (which will cost approximately a sum of Rs. 300), with some outlets. This dam will then be able to retain sufficient water in the field during the months of *Kartick*, *Agrahayan* and *Paush*, when it is most necessary ; and if it rains in the *Baisakh* the water may pass out through the outlets, without injuring the crop. There had been such a dam a few years back but as it had no outlet, the current washed it away in the month of *Baisakh* and *Jyaistha*.

Though the *Aman dhan*-yielding field generally does not require any irrigation, yet I think it advisable to dig some canals across the field so that there may be a regular supply of water. But this should be done in the field which is situated to the east of the village. There is a " bil " to the east of the field itself and I think, water may be raised from that and supplied to the whole

field through the network of canals if it does not rain at the time of tilling the land in the months of *Phalgun* and *Chaitra*. As regards the western field it deserves rather serious attention. Every year when the water swells to the highest point, vast floating masses of water hyacinth are driven by the southern wind on the rice field and threaten the entire crop. In spite of the untiring efforts of the villagers by day and night, the water hyacinth spoils the lower portion of the field. To prevent this ravage of the dangerous plant on the field, strong fencing is suggested on the southern boundary of the field, to be constructed by all the villagers, with whole bamboos and green canes or wires, just before the rains set in.

The area of cultivable lands remained constant for many years but an increase to the extent of 12 Bighas was effected in 1926. Some considerable decrease is threatened by the increasing growth of water hyacinth. In the months of *Aswin* and *Kartick*, water hyacinth may be seen everywhere. It not only spoils a portion of the *Aman* crop but it prevents sometimes the *Shali-Bora-jami* from being utilised in growing paddy. When they cover the *Shali-bora* field, the farmers often despair of removing them. This year, two or three families will be under the painful necessity of cutting out a portion of their total land. The villagers often tell me that it is beyond the power of human beings to fight against the plant.

Purchase and sale of lands on the part of the rayats are an impossibility; it is regarded as a crime in the eye of the Zemindar. This year I have noticed a curious way of paying off debts; but this means is resorted to by the hopelessly poor families of the village. This is another form of mortgaging. A man, for instance, gives away his lands (not all lands of course but a portion of his total possession) to the *mahajan* for seven years.

He has the lands entirely at his disposal and enjoys the fruits of the soil for this long period. In exchange the debt is cancelled off. This new method of paying off debts has been introduced in the village this year. The rayats sometimes agitate without success for gaining ownership of the land and for attaining the right of sale and purchase of lands. This is a most serious grievance of the rayats and I do not know how this will be redressed.

The want of a Co-operative Credit Society is felt by the villagers.

NARAIL-KURIGRAM

By

PROTUL SEN,

IV-YEAR.

Introduction.

The village of Narail-Kurigram in the district of Jessore, is situated on the bank of the river Chittra which flows throughout the year. The Chittra joins the river Nabaganga about four miles above the village. No river in the neighbourhood is yet actually silted up though the Nabaganga might be silted up in course of a few years. But fortunately the Irrigation Branch of the Public Works Department has taken notice of this fact and is thinking of sending out dredgers. The nearest railway station is Singia on the Eastern Bengal Railway line. The other railway station is Daulatpur on the same line about thirty miles distant from the village.

The village is under the jurisdiction of Narail subdivision and police station.

A. Population.

The total population of the village is 896.[1] The number of women in the total population exceeds the number of men and even among the children the number of female children is greater than that of male. Hindus are

[1] The figure is *corrected up to* 15th November, 1928.

greater in number than the Mahomedans as will be shown by the figure:

Hindus—759
Mahomedans—137

Among the Hindus Brahmins and Kayasthas predominate:

Brahmans—189.
Kayasthas—212.

The rest of the Hindu population is divided among the Baidyas, Baruis and other castes.

The number of adults (*i.e.*, over 15 years of age) is 334.

The main causes of changes in population are naturally births and deaths, epidemics, migration and immigration. Of course among these causes of changes in population epidemic is the most important one, for during the outbreak of cholera in 1926, 150 deaths were recorded. General want owing to the high price of staple food is also another reason (though a minor one) for the changes in population. While reviewing the causes of changes in population it strikes one that the population is tending to decrease rather than to increase.

The number of families in the village is 126.

The total number of children in families is 562.

The number of children dead in families is approximately 214, and it must be noted here that most of these children died before they attained the age of five. The reason for this infant mortality is obvious enough; it is due to insanitary habits and lack of knowledge of nursing among the mothers.

The number of homesteads in the village is 132.

During the previous year a bad type of cholera broke out and about 52 people died.

Other causes than cholera account for 18, among which there was one case of death by snake-bite and two cases of death from drowning.

It is really difficult to state precisely the age of marriage for boys and girls in various communities, because they differ very much. However, generally speaking, the age of marriage for Brahmans and Kayasthas is—

Boys—18 to 24 years.
Girls—13 to 18 years.

Other classes—Boys—20 to 30 years.
Girls—9 to 14 years.

Among the Mahomedans and a few orthodox Brahmins, the system of early marriage prevails. Boys marry between the age of 14 to 18 years, and girls between 6 to 13 years.

Occasionally very funny marriages are witnessed even among the Hindus of high families, when an old man of 50 goes out with all pomp and ceremony to marry a girl of 14 years. Of course it is lucky indeed that this sort of ill-matched marriage takes place very seldom.

The village is not entirely free from communal tension. Occasionally traces of it can be found amongst the Mahomedans and Namasudras against the Hindus. Only last year the Namasudras of the village rose against the Hindu population of the village. The quarrel arose out of the question of worshipping the idol of Kali but it was set right by the timely and clever intervention of the Zemindars.

It may be remarked here that the spirit of communal tension has been sowed in the village after the outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riot at Calcutta.

B. Sanitary Conditions of the Village.

Malaria is very much prevalent specially from the month of October to January. Cholera generally breaks out twice a year. During the change of seasons cases of pneumonia and typhoid fever are seen. Small-pox was quite a common disease, but it must be noted here that the number of cases of small-pox has fallen down very greatly during the recent years owing to the system of compulsory vaccination at the charitable dispensary of the Zemindars. It is a matter of regret that though the Zemindars have tried their best to get every villager vaccinated, many, owing to their queer prejudices, avoid it. Tuberculosis and kala-azar are rather uncommon though last year there were two cases of the former disease. Among other diseases dysentery and diarrhœa are common enough among the lower classes specially among the children for they seldom discriminate about the food they take. Among certain Hindus and Mahomedans (specially those who have been to towns) cases of venereal disease are also observed.

Medical assistance is available but it is rather a little costly for the people in general. There is one M.B. doctor and a Kaviraj appointed by the Zemindars. The former only gives free advice in the morning at the charitable dispensary. The people of the village who cannot afford to pay the cost of medical advice go down to the subdivisional town (2 miles away from the village) where there is a good hospital and a sub-assistant surgeon. It is rather an encouraging thing that the Zemindars felt the necessity for obtaining cheap, even free if necessary, medical assistance for the villagers and are soon going to appoint an L.M.S. doctor.

Insanitary habits are observed specially among the *Chamars*, the lower classes of Hindus and poor Mahomedans. It is curious indeed that these people regard cleanliness as a luxury and foppishness. Their cow-sheds are very near their bed-rooms and their latrines are very ill-kept. They do not care to get their drinking water from the river though it is very close but procure their supply from a neighbouring dirty tank. Smoking habit among the children of these classes is also very common.

The condition of living among the upper classes of the Hindus is good enough. They seem to have appreciated the value of sanitary habits and cleanliness.

4. Generally speaking, the river water is used for both drinking and domestic purposes but there are some three tanks in the village and the villagers use their water for domestic purposes. The river water is good enough for drinking purposes. There are also two tube-wells and the water supplied by them is the best drinking water obtainable in the village.

5. Only the villagers whose habits are insanitary bathe, wash their clothes and take drinking water from the same tank, but the rest do not drink the water of the tank in which they do the washing. But most persons bathe, wash clothes and use for drinking purposes the same stream (*i.e.*, the river).

6. There is no drainage system and mosquitoes are seen in large numbers in stagnant ponds from the rainy season down to the month of October. Cases of snake-bite are also pretty common, specially during the rains. Last year there were three cases of snake-bite one of which proved fatal.

7. Brick-buildings are few in number. The total number is 15 and most of them belong to the Zemindars. Corrugated-iron and thatched houses are generally used.

The number of corrugated-iron houses is 31.
The number of thatched houses is 86 (approximately).
(These numbers include both homesteads and shops.)

C. Land—Agricultural and Non-agricultural.

Nearly all the land in the vicinity of the village (within its jurisdiction) is cultivated, the area of which is over 180 *bighas*. Only a few plots of lands are cultivated within the village, and its area is not more than 10 *bighas*.

2. There is no fallow land, really speaking, though there may be very small plots within the court-yards of the homesteads of some villagers.

3. There is not much of jungly lands though here and there are bushes and small jungles but its total area probably does not exceed 8 to 10 *bighas*.

4. No wells are used for agricultural purposes; only in a very few cases are tanks used for such purposes.

5. There is no provision for irrigation.

6. The Zemindars have effected really little substantial improvement. They have, however, cut a few sluices for water supply in the fields.

7. The selling price of land varies from year to year. This year it is Rs. 70 to Rs. 80 per *bigha*.

8. The area of average holding is about three to five *bighas* each but the holdings are generally very much scattered which in most cases makes large-scale production an absurdity.

D. Use of Land.

1. The number of land-owners cultivating lands themselves is few—it is only about $\frac{1}{8}$th of the population.

(The total population is 896.) The number of non-cultivating landowners is about $\frac{5}{6}$ths of the total population.

3. The number of tenants, *i.e.*, the actual tillers of the land, who own lands is 15 (approximately).

4. The number of agricultural workers is not exactly known but it exceeds 30.

5. The average rent per *bigha* is Rs. 1-8 per annum.

6. Owners of land get $\frac{1}{2}$ of the produce and the *Bargadars* get the other half. This system of *Barga* has been the prevailing custom so long. But the *Bargadars* now demand $\frac{2}{3}$ of the produce and consequently a strong agitation is afloat. It may be mentioned here that one of the bad results of the demand of the *Bargadars* is that the middle class people are not cultivating at all this year.

E. Agriculture.

The principal crops of the village are rice and jute. There are minor crops such as mustards, grams and such other things but they do not deserve any special mention. The price of rice varies from Rs. 5-12 to Rs. 7-8 per maund and the price of jute varies from Rs. 6-8 to Rs. 10 per maund.

2. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ths of the land yield only one crop per annum.

3. The rest, *i.e.*, $\frac{1}{4}$th of the land, yields only two crops per annum.

4. There is not a single plot of land which yields three crops each year. The cultivators were surprised when I enquired about it.

5. The country-plough is the only agricultural implement used. No modern implements are used for cultivation. The Zemindars were some time back thinking of using modern implements for use in their lands. One of the members of the Zemindar family

happened to be a graduate in Agriculture. I am not sure whether they have dropped the idea totally.

6. The general condition of the live-stock is not very encouraging, rather it is discouraging. It is probably due to the lack of care and ignorance of the way how to keep them best. Very often the sheds used for them are extremely narrow and specially during the rains are full of mud and water.

7. The main fodder of the cattle is dry and green grass. There is no common pasturage, the want of which is felt by some of the villagers. But nothing has yet been done in the way of getting a common pasturage. The condition of cattle in the winter is very distressing. Cases have occurred where it was found that the cattle died of sheer cold.

8. The condition of breeding is also not good. The country bulls are not strong and not of large size and they are very few in number. The Mahomedans of the village sometimes let their bulls at the nominal charge of Re. 1 but they cannot keep the bulls which are dedicated by the Hindus at the time of *Sradh* ceremonies.

The price of an ox varies from Rs. 35 to Rs. 90.

Manures are seldom used except occasionally in high lands and cow-dung is the most common form of manure.

No improvement has been effected by the Agricultural or Veterinary Department. The District Agricultural Office at Jessore is too far off for the villagers to receive any help from it.

Almost all the cultivators work with their own ploughs and bullocks. Only about 2% of the cultivators hire them.

F. Village Industry.

Really speaking there is no village industry. People are unwilling to take to industry and one of the causes is

that they do not receive any encouragement in this respect from the villagers. They lack capital and sympathy. There were a few weavers but they have left the industry altogether and some of them are at present employed as coolies in the local steamer station. What little of the cottage industry is seen at present in the village is for supplying articles for personal use.

G. *Village Trade.*

The condition of the village trade is not very flourishing. The sale of village produce is effected generally through a large number of intermediaries who reap all the profits. There is no very great commercial centre near the village and that is also a reason why trade is not as prosperous as it might be. The only means of transport is the steamer, but the freight rates are rather too high for the encouragement of village trade.

The village trade and industry can only be revived if money is sufficiently available and if the rate of interest is less than the present rate. The most important thing is encouragement and in order to give it adequately and freely, the Zemindars and the educated men of the village must take the lead.

H. *General Economic Conditions.*

1. Very few (about 8 to 10 only) depend wholly on agriculture for their livelihood. There are some who depend partly on agriculture. These people generally get themselves employed in some capacity or other in some upper class family.

2. There is not a single family which depends entirely on industry for livelihood.

3. There are about a dozen people who do not follow any productive calling but live on either charity

or begging. The number of beggars is 7 ; they generally make their appeal to the humanity of the people at the steamer station and at the sub-divisional court at Narail. The rest, about five in number (most of whom are old widows), live on the charity of the Zemindars. There are about three lunatics: two females and one male. They also live on charity.

4. Field labourers are few in number—not more than 20—most of whom are employed by the Zemindars and the non-cultivating landowners. They receive wages in money from 10 as. to 12 as. per day.

5. The number of other labourers is about 15.

The wages of barbers amount from Rs. 2 to Rs. 4 per annum ; and that of washermen Rs. 4 to Rs. 5 per 100 pieces of clothes.

Often these people offer their services in return for a free use of land.

6. More than half of the earning members of the families live outside the village for most part of the year. Their number exceeds fifty.

(*a*) Teachers employed in primary and secondary schools and in colleges are about twelve in number. There are some also whose profession is teaching and who live in the village for the most part of the year. But they hail from other places. It may also be mentioned that there are two such women teachers.

(*b*) Pleaders—4 (practising in the sub-divisional town and the district town).

(*c*) There are no civil servants at present. There was one in the family of the Zemindar but he died ten years ago.

(*d*) Among the approximate number of "other labourers" given in a preceding section, more than $\frac{3}{4}$ths of the number are employed in the cities. The rest is employed at the various sub-divisional towns.

(f) *Mahajans* and traders number about 32 and most of them are employed by the Zemindars.

7. Generally speaking, a cultivator idles away the time not spent in actual cultivation. Occasionally he employs himself in making fishing nets or in repairing thatches of other people.

8. As has been noted in a paragraph above, the general tendency is to while away the time with no work at all. A cultivator in the slack season, when the condition is normal, does not prefer taking any subsidiary calling but sits idle at home. Only a few of the cultivators are a little industrious and some of them in slack seasons get themselves employed as day labourers or take to trade such as selling *pan* and *biḍis* at the neighbouring sub-divisional court.

Of course when the conditions are abnormal the cultivators, who have no saving of the previous year, are forced to fall upon anything they get. They generally go to Khulna to get some kind of job in the rice mills or come down to Calcutta and become hawkers of things like fruits, ices and mats, etc. It is an encouraging fact that at least a small portion of the cultivators are taking some interest in *Khadi* activity.

There is a marked tendency among the youngmen of the village to emigrate to towns ; for, they say, they are tired of the dull and monotonous life of the village. Railways, specially the E. B. Railway, have a special charm for them and most of them regard it as a matter of pride to be appointed in the railways. Not less than 90% of the ticket-checking staff, corrected up to 1927, we are told, hail from the district of Jessore and Khulna.

There are some ambitious youngmen also who find that they do not get enough scope in the village and so they emigrate to towns and cities. The elders of the

village, however, note with a little satisfaction that the lure of the cities and towns, with all their theatres, cinemas and other amusements, is falling off gradually specially after the slogan "Back to the villages" has been preached.

The current price of rice is Rs. 5-12 to 7-8 per md.

More than half of the families are in debt. Some of them are heavily indebted The causes of indebtedness are, chiefly, failure of crops, marriage of girls, *serious* diseases and litigations. Last year a Kayastha family was heavily indebted on account of the marriage ceremony of a girl in the family (the family had to borrow Rs. 2,000 at an interest of 25 % per annum). Family quarrels are also very common and in order to settle them they take the help of the court and necessarily run into heavy debts. At least two glaring instances can be found where flourishing families have run into heavy debts due to partition suits.

There are no mahajans in the village proper but there are some in the sub-divisional town. About three people, two of them old widows, lend out money at high rates of interest.

The rate of interest varies from twelve to thirty per cent. per annum.

There is a Co-operative Credit Society at the sub-divisional town. It is not in a very flourishing condition. There are a president and six directors. People are enrolled first as members by buying shares worth Rs. 10 and these members are supplied with money at the rate of 15% interest per annum. The Credit Society pays an interest of only 8 per cent. per annum on fixed deposits.

Membership of dramatic clubs, *jatra*-parties or other amusement clubs are the items of non-productive expenditure of the villagers. During the Durga Puja festival this year there were about three dramatic performances

and villagers bore the expenditure which approximately amounted to Rs. 125

Only a small percentage of the villagers (not more than 2%) pay income-tax but nearly all have to pay the *Chowkidari* taxes. The tax is levied on income and the general way of living. Those people who earn more than Rs. 200 a month have to pay annas 6 as *Chowkidari* tax.

The general tendency of the villagers is to escape any kind of tax whatsoever and there are certainly some families at least who do not pay any kind of taxes though they are in a position to do so.

The number of families (except the Zemindars) who have bank accounts is very few, probably not more than five; but there are a good many families who have accounts to their credit at the Post Office Savings Bank. There are also twelve persons who have life insurance policies (average Rs. 1,000 only).

I. Education.

1. One second grade college, *i.e.*, an intermediate college. The college is managed by the Zemindars of the village and they do their best for the college. There is also a High English School and this school is also under the management of the Zemindars of the place. Special facilities for sports and physical culture are afforded both in the college and in the school. It may also be noted that there are spinning classes both in the college and in the school, which are compulsory. There is one Guru Training School which is managed by the local *pandits*. It is founded with a view to give training on *Brahmacharya* principles, but it is doubtful whether the students of this institution are really benefited in any substantial way. There are two small *pathsalas*. In each of them more than fifty boys learn their elementary

lessons. There is also a girls' school which assemble in the house of a Zemindar. The Zemindars, specially the ladies of the house, greatly encourage female education and through their encouragement the number of students in this primary girls' school is gradually increasing.

2. More than half of the boys and girls of the village (number exceeds 200 approx.) attend some school or other.

About 8 per cent. of the adults are able to read and write vernacular and about 4 per cent. of the adults read and write English. There are 26 graduates in all, but there are a few more really educated people though they have not received any high University degree.

There are not many instances of students passing through secondary schools and securing satisfactory positions. Only last year a boy of the village who received secondary school education has been appointed at the Kanchrapara Workshops as an artisan.

7. About five men have settled in the village after receiving good education but the way they use their education is not worth mentioning. Two of the local men are trying to open a small boys' school on Kindergarten system. They attended with this end in view a course of lectures at the Teachers' Training College.

8. There is one well-equipped college library and one village public library. Most of the people do not make much use of the library.

J. Village Administration.

1. Some years ago a Union Board was introduced. Much excitement was seen at the time of election of the President and the people seemed to be very keen about it. There is no Panchayat system in the village. A detailed account of the Union Board cannot at the present

moment be attempted as its organisation is not yet complete.

3. The number of crimes in the village is very small, only occasionally stray cases of theft are heard. Theft is generally committed during those seasons in which crops fail.

4. From the month of February till the month of October, there were about 187 villagers engaged in litigation.

5. Disputes are occasionally settled by the Zemindars but the villagers are now eager to have their disputes settled at the courts.

Minor disputes will henceforward be settled by the Union Board.

K. The middle class people (specially the Hindus) are in great distress. They cannot do manual labour, and jobs other than those which involve manual labour are very hard to find. The abnormal rise in the price of staple foods tells very heavily on the poor villagers. Being ill-fed and ill-clothed, they are losing vitality, strength, and energy and are falling easy preys to diseases. The average expenses of living is not less than Rs. 8-8 per head but the average income is only Rs. 3-4 per head a month. In short, the middle class population is gradually dying out.

MAJPARA (DACCA)

By X. Y. Z.

Introduction.

The road constructed by the Local Board that runs through the heart of Majpara stops just near the boundary of the village market. A visitor is, at the first sight, sure to be impressed by the natural beauty of the village. At the very entrance he sees a vast field stretching from north to south surrounded by detached houses on three sides which look like little hills in summer and strips of islands in the rainy season. The bazaar forms the boundary of the northern side of the field. The village, which is situated in the eastern part of Bengal and belongs to Pargana Bikrampur, suffers from floods for about six months in every year during the rainy season beginning from the Bengali month *Ashar* to *Agrahayan*. During this time, people are put to great difficulties, specially if the level of water is higher than usual; and the boat is the only means of conveyance as the depth of water exceeds sometimes even 18 feet. It is, of course, useful in some respects, as the great part of the village trade is conducted during this period of the year. But the scarcity of foodstuffs, the excessive rise of prices of every article at this time, the inconveniences of transportation and every kind of communication during the period of this annual flood are more than bearable.

There are no forests or hills. Neither the village nor even its immediate vicinity is served by any railway. The great Padma river is only two miles off from our village. The river is well-known for its destructive and devouring nature and it has defaced many a village in Eastern Bengal, and it is approaching us constantly but slowly.

To us it is the great connecting link with the outside world. The village had a canal, but it is now almost silted up. The '*Irol Bill*' which is well-known for its vastness, production of many crops (for a part of the lake is dry for most part of the year) and varieties of fishes, particularly '*Kai*' fish, forms the northern boundary of the village. The village is in a low land unlike many other villages of the district.

The name of the village is Majpara in the district of Dacca, under the Police and Sub-Registry station Srinagar. It is in the Bikrampur Pargana and under the subdivision of Munshiganj.

A. Population.

1. Total population of the village is about (approximate, not exact) four thousand (4,000).

2. About two-thirds of the population are Hindus, and only one-third Mahomedans. Almost all the Hindu castes are found in the village. Hindu societies cannot exist without mutual co-operation, sympathy and exchange of mutual help between the different castes. Our village is self-sufficient in this respect. The reason is that the Zemindars of the village who are Brahmins and reside in it, had in the past brought in from other places people of different castes whose services are exceedingly necessary in every-day existence. They gave these people houses, rent-free lands and various other privileges which they are in some cases enjoying for generations in exchange for paid or unpaid services which they are still rendering to the Zemindars or other influential persons of the village. But their number is rapidly decreasing owing to various causes, chief among them being the rapid growth of the sense of self-respect and consequent desertion of the age-long occupations for better ones both in the village and outside.

Among the Hindus a little more than a fifth are Brahmins; three-fifths are Kayasthas, Goalas, goldsmiths, fishermen, various other castes including washermen, barbers, *malakars*, etc., and the rest are Bhuimalis and Namasudras and weavers. Bhuimalis, generally, employ themselves in digging soils or cleaning houses; many of them at present have become either blacksmiths or goldsmiths; the Namasudras generally do the sowing, wood-cutting, etc. Females form more than half of the population; but it is exceedingly difficult to give an exact account by private investigation.

3. Population is generally stationary and no change of population is noticed. For some time the village has been free from epidemics. In the rainy season for the purpose of trade or to work as day labourers an insignificant part of the population emigrate temporarily to other villages or towns which are near about. People in service or other capacities stay outside the village for some months of the year.

4. There are about 350 families in the village, of which about 40 are Brahmins, 60 fishermen, 60 milkmen, 40 goldsmiths, about 45 Namasudras, 20 Bhuimalis, 10 weavers and the rest are Mahomedans.

5. The lower or depressed classes have got more children than those of the higher classes. A few families are without children.

(*a*) Approximately 1,000 children are living in all families.

(*b*) Vital statistics are not available. But the point is that infant mortality is not common in the village. Every infant (except in a few cases), be it of a high class or low, gets plenty of light and air though not nourishing food in all cases, and grows and dies, if in its infancy, from natural causes alone.

6. As regards the age of marriage, it can safely be demarcated into two broad classes; one age for the Brahmins who are well-to-do and cultured, and another for the rest of the community including the Kayasthas who in our village are backward, unlike the inhabitants of other villages. Among the Brahmins the age for the boys varies from 22 to 25 years. For the girls it is between 13 to 15 though occasionally exceptions are found and youths marry below or above that limit. Among other classes marriage occurs earlier both for the boys and girls. In some communities, chiefly the Bhuimalis and weavers (*Yogis*), girls are married even before ten.

7. Though there are different localities or *paras* for certain communities such as milkmen, grocers (Sahas), Kaibartas (fishermen), and Namasudras, no such word as localisation can be safely applied to them. As for the Hindus, both Brahmins and Kayasthas live side by side and castes and sub-castes are generally found scattered all over the village even in the *paras*. The Mahomedans live in quite separate places remote from the Hindus, and they have got a *para* of their own in the western part of the village. The *Karmakars* have got a separate *para* on the southern side of the village.

8. No communal tension exists at present. During the unfortunate riots all over Bengal, some fanatical Mullahs tried to excite the Musalmans and a quarrelsome spirit was in evidence in both the communities, but it has subsided. The Hindus and Musalmans live in complete peace at present.

B. *Sanitary Conditions of the Village.*

Malaria is prevalent practically throughout the whole of the year, but the number of patients suffering from it

is so great as to cause consternation as in some other places of Bengal. After all, in this respect there is no serious complaint.

Patients suffering from cholera are more or less found almost throughout the whole of the year, but the epidemic season is generally the months of *Chaitra, Baisakh, Jaistha* and in the first part of the rainy season. The advent of water hyacinth is considered a blessing in that it has removed the epidemic type of cholera in every village. There is hardly any tuberculosis except in such cases when persons after contracting the disease in towns come back to the village for treatment or light and air. But there has not been any case of recovery.

In the winter season and occasionally in summer, there is a small number of small-pox cases.

Kala-azar is present in the village but most of the patients belong to the class of farmers.

2. There is a good number of petty doctors trained both in Allopathic and Homeopathic systems of medicine. Of these one Homeopathic doctor of considerable experience enjoys a lucrative practice in cholera, infant and female diseases. In serious cases, the Allopathic doctors are brought from the village of Bhagyakul which is two miles off. We have a well-known *Kaviraj* in our village. He treats the diseases of old age and other wasting diseases satisfactorily. People from other villages always try to get his services. There are a few other petty *Kavirajes*.

3. The Brahmins and Kayasthas are always neat and clean with a few exceptions where they are too much crowded.

The fishermen and milkmen are the worst offenders in this respect. The outer portion of their house is filled with rubbish and filthy matter, but the inside of every house is no doubt clean as every village woman takes it to be

her duty to wash with water and clean the inside of the house. The sign of untidiness which is seen in every hut is due to its small area. The Musalmans are neat enough.

4. There are hundreds of tanks, large or small, throughout the village, but only a few are used for drinking purposes, though all of them are used for domestic purposes. No particular tank is set apart for drinking purposes. Every tank is covered more or less with water-hyacinth, the pest which causes so much trouble both in the summer and in the rainy seasons. The ponds which supply drinking water are required to be got rid of this pest every month, otherwise it soon covers the whole area and makes the water quite unfit for drinking. But if checked and kept in a limited quantity, water-hyacinth helps to preserve the purity of water. Nothing can be said of its quality except that naturally it does not tell upon the health of the villagers and no serious complaint is heard against it.

The water of the village is cool, refreshing and conducive to general health and vigour.

5. The villagers bathe and wash their clothes in the same tank from which they use water for drinking purposes. But they do not usually use the same tank for washing cattle or other domestic animals. Two or three tanks in the village are used for bathing purposes only by their owners, while others are allowed only to take water from them.

6. There is no artificial drainage. Rain-water flows naturally to the tanks, pools, silted-up canals, etc. There is quite a large number of filthy, stagnant pools. All of them at present are filled with water-hyacinth. They are scattered all the village over and many of them are used for domestic purposes by persons who have no tanks within easy reach.

Mosquitoes infest the village throughout the year and in some part of the year (in the rainy season) their invasion in thousands becomes intolerable.

Every year one or two cases of snake-bite occur, and in most of them the patient succumbs to it, if it is of the poisonous cobra variety. During the yearly flood when the great *Irol Bill* and other pieces of land are under water, a number of snakes take shelter in the homes of the villagers, and generally cases of snake-bite are more heard of in the rainy season than at other times.

7. Among Brahmins, the Zemindars and Talukdars have got *Pucca* buildings and corrugated-iron houses. Other castes mostly have houses made of corrugated iron and only a few day-labourers have thatched houses.

Housing conditions are satisfactory among upper classes. They know how to enjoy light or air and make provision for it in the construction of any new building or house. But some of the old buildings of the village are quite unfit for human habitation, although people put up in them. Among the low classes many of the houses are found without windows and that is due to the fearful storms and hurricanes that rage in the rainy season sometimes for a whole day or two without any stoppage. The famous storm of the year 1326 B. S. have made people more cautious.

The number of buildings is fourteen.

C. Land.

1. Area of land cultivated will be about 300 *Kanis* or 400 acres.

2. Fallow land will be about 50 acres including the play-ground which forms the major portion of it.

3. There is no jungle in the village. Many of the homesteads in the interior of the village have trees or

weeds around them which seem like jungles from outside, they are so woven and interwoven with one another. But these serve as protection from storms and waves ; and many of the trees bear fruits for consumption, and both trees and weeds are used as fuels.

4. No tank is used as source of water-supply for agricultural purposes. There is no well in the village. Nature fertilises the land with water for six months in the year.

There are no irrigation works. The perennial flood irrigates every nook and corner of the land.

6. No improvement has been effected by the Zemindar, nor has any necessity arisen for that so far.

7. Selling price of land is generally Rs. 100 per *bigha* or Rs. 400 per *Kani*. But here also qualities of land count much. Productivity is the first question, then comes the number of crops, whether the crops will endure the pressure of the strong current in the rainy season or they are likely to be destroyed by the boats, being by the side of any water-way. Last of all, though not the least, comes the question of the water-hyacinth, but it is avoidable and does not count for much. So the price varies both above or below what is mentioned above. Sometimes the question of necessity, *e.g.*, when the land in question is in the immediate vicinity of the house, comes up.

8. The Hindus hold the major part of the land. The area of the holdings of the Mahomedans is about 70 to 75 acres.

D. Use of Land.

1. In the whole village the number of owners cultivating their own land is confined to 2 or 3 Goalas.

2. There are about 20 non-cultivating families (landowners), of whom the Brahmins form the largest number. The rest are a few Karmakars and Goalas.

3. There are about 130 families who are tenants and own lands.

4. More than 70 families consist of agricultural workers

5. The average rent per *bigha* varies from Re. 1 to 8 as.

6. The *Barga* system prevails to a great extent in the village. Sometimes different conditions or agreements are made between the *Bargadars* and owners; but the most common system among them is that the *Barga* cultivators cultivate lands at their own cost and labour; and take the crops by equal division; *i.e.*, 50 per cent. belong to the cultivator himself and 50 per cent. to the original owner of the land. In some cases the owners are to supply seeds or in lieu of that, allot a separate part of the crop at the time of division. In a few cases the *Bargadars* pay only a fixed amount in lieu of the crops, but they are to pay it up in any case, even if the crops fail or sustain injury.

For jute cultivation a little less than 40 to 45 per cent. of the crops is paid to the owners. Many cultivators solely rely upon the crops of the *Barga* land and quite a good number of the middle class gentlemen of the village partly or wholly depend upon this source of income (of crops). This system is considered to be a good arrangement for the landowners and cultivators.

E. Agriculture.

1. The principal crops are paddy and jute, pulses, vegetables, pumpkins and a small quantity of *rai*.

Local rice sells at Rs. 6 to Rs. 6-8 per maund, jute for the last two years has been sold at Rs. 7 to Rs. 12 per maund according to quality.

2. About two-thirds of the cultivated lands, that is, about 260 acres or more than that, yield only one crop of rice or jute per annum.

3. The remaining portion of land, *i.e.*, about 140 acres, yields two crops per annum.

4. No land yields three crops, all land in the village being very low.

5. The implement and ploughs, generations old, drawn across with the help of bullocks, are used in all the villages.

There are no buffaloes in our village. Almost every villager has cows in his house. A good number of healthy oxen are to be found in the village. Every milkman has got his oxen along with the cows. Some farmers among the Musalmans, too, have their own oxen. Their general condition is not deplorable. Some oxen of fairly big size and vigour are to be found in the bazaar in the rainy season.

7. The usual fodder for cattle is grass, hay (rice), cakes of oil seeds and sometimes boiled rice or its watery portion. But the chief fodder is grass, of which sufficient quantity is available in the winter season both in the village and in the *Irol Bill.*

There was no common pasturage formerly, but the playground which is just in the heart of the village has been serving as common pasturage for years. Besides this, a sufficient quantity of grass grows near the Local Board road and feeds the cattle of the village.

In winter, the cattle are quite well off as they have something or other to eat. With the advent of rainy season, fodder is not available in sufficient quantity and water-hyacinth is the only article of their diet and they are reduced to skeleton. Some farmers do not even spare a shed for the accommodation of cattle in the rainy season to protect them from the rains as a result of which

too many of them live in a little space of land and sometimes upon a filthy and quite unwholesome place. But some farmers value the comfort of cattle and try to give them protection even to their own discomfort. Another material of food is a kind of weed, called *Buksha*, which grow in the *Bil.*

8. Generally the villagers breed their own cattle and only occasionally buy them. Every farmer or most housekeepers have their own cattle, which in most cases, increase in number. With few exceptions, farmers are compelled sometimes to dispense with some of the cattle owing to this increase.

As mentioned before, oxen, both belonging to private persons or to the public in general, are never wanting in the village. For breeding purposes they are used all over the village. But the cattle in Eastern Bengal never grow to such size as those of Western Bengal. The young ones are reared along with the older cattle, and no particular attention is given to them except that they are well cared for in the matter of giving them freedom to drink the milk of their mother.

If the villagers are to purchase cattle, which they seldom do, they procure them from a *hat* in the Delbhog village four miles off, or from any village on the other side of the river Padma in the *chars.*

Their price generally varies from Rs. 50 to Rs. 125 according to the quantity of milk they give which never exceeds 4 seers beginning from half a seer. The young ones sell at a lower price.

9. No manure is used by the cultivators. But after the flood subsides, every year water-hyacinth and weeds grow upon the lands; and there is of course the stubble on paddy fields ; these the cultivators burn every year, and the ash is mixed up with the soil while tilling. For some crops, cowdung is sometimes used as manure.

10. No improvements have been made in cultivation in recent times and they are not helped in any way by the Agricultural and Veterinary Departments.

11. The cost of cultivation per *bigha* is for paddy Re. 1-8 and for jute about Rs. 5.

12. About two thirds of the cultivators work with their own ploughs and bullocks, the rest hiring them. The rate of hire is between Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 per *Kani* or 4 *Bighas*. (16 *Kathas* make approximately 1 *Kani*.)

F. Village Industry.

The chief industries are those of the weavers and the goldsmiths. Others are those of the boat-makers, brass-smiths, *Malakars*, and some Brahmin widows who make 'sacred threads,' etc.

The weavers manufacture *sadis* and cloths for every-day use, napkins, curtain-cloth, etc. The raw material for this purpose, yarn, etc., are procured from the *hats*. The rest they do with their own appliances. Some weavers make cloth at their own cost and sell in the bazaar of the village or in the mofussil But there are many who do not or cannot afford to buy the thread but are supplied with them by some weaver *mahajan* or big-dealers, who pay for their labour. The payments are settled on the length of cloth, number of curtain-cloths or napkins. I know of two families who for want of capital served the *mahajans* in this fashion for a long period, but who have recently given it up.

The weaving industry of our village was on the verge of ruin, but the Non-Co-operation and Boycott Movements with their spirit of renaissance stopped the tide. The so-long neglected and poverty-stricken weavers again employed themselves in their industry to supply

the demands of hand-made cloth both in our village and outside. Some of the weavers who already became retail-dealers in our own bazaar have turned back to their industry.

The *charka* whirled in almost every hut, but in the later stages of the movement, these gentlemen gave up their temporary affection for weaving. At present, a few women work on the *charka* which is supplied by the agent of Abhay Asram of Malikanda (in Bikrampur) and for this these women are paid. This agent lives in the adjoining village and regularly gathers hand-spun thread.

The goldsmiths are plying a thriving trade in this village. The number of goldsmiths is constantly increasing, and one important feature is that persons of other castes, particularly those of Bhuimali community, are flocking to this industry. Spread all the village over there are a great number of shops of goldsmiths, being generally built in the outer portion of their houses. They make all the jewellery of our village and much of that of the adjoining four or five villages. Some of the goldsmiths have excelled in the industry and are not in the least inferior to their brethren of the town. In fact, a good many of the goldsmiths of the village are employed in towns, both in Calcutta and Dacca, and draw a good salary. They have their own shops, too, in these centres.

The goldsmiths are whole-timers. Of the weavers only a very few are part-timers. These part-timers carry on other business along with their industry.

These two principal industries are progressing, the main cause being the increase of demand. The causes of progress of the weavers' industry have already been described. It is seen that at present even the lower classes are using gold ornaments, whereas in the past gold

ornaments were generally worn only by the well-to-do classes alone. Everybody, even the farmers, when they can save some rupees, gives orders for gold ornaments in addition to those of silver. Ornaments made of silver are still in vogue.

It seems that with the fall in price of gold and due to other economic causes, silver has lost its former place of honour. The industry is sufficiently remunerative, and is held in a sort of prestige higher than that of other industries or service.

G. Village Trade.

At the outset something must be said of the village bazaar where almost all the trades of the village are conducted. It covers a wide area and there are about forty (40) permanent shops in it besides double the number of temporary huts, wherein commodities are sold both in the bazaar-time every morning, or on the *hat* days in the evening (two days a week). Besides these dealers more than two hundred persons belonging to our village and adjoining ones gather here and deal in milk, rice, vegetables, fruits, tobacco-leaves, sweet-meats, piece-goods, spices, fish and things made of milk, such as—curds, butter, *ghee, khir* (both perfectly condensed and half-condensed). These milk-made things and fish are brought every morning in large quantities. Huge quantities of fish, *ghee* butter, curds, etc., are exported to Calcutta and Dacca.

Some of the big shops deal solely in clothes—Indian and foreign. The prosperity of the bazaar can be made out from the fact that 5 tailoring shops are conducting their trade.

Most of the village produce except jute is brought in the market. Jute is sold at the houses of the villagers to the *Dalals* or agents of the smaller jute companies (*Aratdars*).

In the winter season horses form the sole means of conveyance of goods to or from the village. As already stated the village has no railway or river in the immediate vicinity and the District Board road is the sole means for the transport of commodities. But in the rainy season and during the period of the floods, trade is carried on extensively. Boats, small and large, are used for this purpose. The major portion of piecegoods, cloths, etc., and every kind of fuel—coal and wood—are bought in huge quantities and kept in store for consumption in the remaining part of the year. Hundreds of bamboos, planks, etc., are brought at this time for retail and wholesale purchases by the house-owners.

The village is at a distance of 8 hours' journey from the town of Dacca, and most of the cloths, piecegoods, sugar, etc., are brought from there. But both in the winter and the rainy seasons, trade is carried on, more or less, with Tarpassa (one of the four great steamer stations on the Padma in Eastern Bengal) which is 7 or 8 miles off from the village. Rice is always imported from Bhagyakul (on the river Padma) and Tarpassa.

H. General Economic Conditions of the Village.

Approximately 300 persons or about 15 families depend on agriculture for their livelihood. About 200 persons are wholly dependent. About 100 persons are partly dependent.

Four or five families or nearly 50 persons live on cottage industries.

More than thirty persons live on charity. Some of these persons are quite unfit for following any productive calling. Some time ago they were regularly supplied with rice from the Relief Fund of the village founded on the collection of rice from every housekeeper

every week. This function is soon to be started again.

There are sixty to seventy field labourers. Their wages vary from 12 as. to 1 rupee. They are not generally paid in kind.

Barbers and washermen number about 15. (Some of them have given up their profession in favour of trade.) They get yearly wages from different families and remuneration in cloth, rupees, rice, fruits, etc., on ceremonial occasions such as marriage, *Sradh* and others.

The number of persons living outside the village and earning their livelihood in professions or by service is 200.

Number of teachers is three or four only.

There are only 6 pleaders in the village.

Civil servants number more than 20 (about 25).

About 200 persons are serving as employees in cities.

I think more than 150 persons are employed in factories in cities like Chandpur, Narayanganj, Chittagong, Dacca and Calcutta.

There are approximately 200 persons in the employ of zemindars, mahajans and traders.

In slack seasons cultivators employ themselves in small trades—buying and selling rice, paddy, etc., or selling milk of the cows which they tend (they sell milk in all the seasons), or the produce of their own houses, such as vegetables, etc. In normal times of cultivation they do not do any small trade except selling the produce of their own house or land. When they have leisure some of them employ themselves as day-labourers to other cultivators or farmers who need them. There is no other subsidiary calling.

Those from our village who have already qualified themselves as pleaders, civil servants, doctors and engineers have emigrated to the town.

60 to 70 families from all groups can save, and about 25 have savings bank accounts; only 5 or 6 persons have bank accounts.

About 125 families are in debt.

Generally villagers borrow money when their incomes fall short of the expenditure on necessities of life. But very often they fall into indebtedness on ceremonial occasions—such as marriage. In most cases it is noticed that high and low alike spend unnecessarily on feast, pomp and show, which they cannot afford, but the pressure of public opinion plays an important part in this matter. Fishermen or milkmen sometimes borrow on business purposes, but once borrowed they are never disposed to return the sum even in flourishing stages unless compelled to do so. There are also cases of inadequate income specially in years of failure of crops. Middle class people resort to loans to preserve their higher standard of living.

10 to 12 families (heads of the families) are mahajans.

There is no co-operative credit society.

12 to 15 people pay income taxes and 95 per cent. of villagers pay Chowkidari taxes.

Taxes are levied according to condition.

I. Education.

We have got no High English School in our village. There are only two *Pathshalas* or Lower Primary School for young boys. The High English School named "Sir Jagadischandra Bose's Institution," and situated in the village Rarikhal is only about 5 minutes' walk from our village. Within a radius of 3 miles there are also 4 or 5 larger institutions. Two girls' schools are in the adjoining village and one is shortly going to be started in our own.

There are about 100 boys and 25 girls.

More than half the number of adults can read and write vernacular.

Adults who can read and write English are mainly among the Brahmins.

Many of the boys who studied in colleges after passing through secondary schools have obtained satisfactory start in their life, and many after passing through secondary school have got into service though not always equally remunerative.

None of good education has settled in the village; only old men of exhausted energy after their life of service in professions have come back to the village after long absence and settled in it.

At present there are two small libraries in the village. A good library containing valuable collections of books was started a few years back under the able guidance of a highly educated villager (Professor of Jagannath College, Dacca), but with his sad and premature demise it has already ceased functioning due to the negligence of the office-bearers. But another is soon expected to be started.

J. Village Administration.

There is a Union Board which is called Rarikhal Majpara Union Board. The Board consists of 9 members. From them one is elected as President and another as Vice-President by the majority of the members. The Board has the power of Court and Bench and for this separate function four members are nominated by the Government to try small cases, both Civil and Criminal.

The members with the consent of the majority carry on their duties of levying Chowkidary taxes, etc., for the improvement of village roads, sanitation and primary education.

The Board has improved village roads and paths. Care is taken for vaccination and sometimes free distribution of medicines. For primary education *Pathshalas* are established jointly with the District Board (not in our village).

Crimes are of small nature.

The village has its quota of litigants most of whom are in debt in consequence. In our own village one particular Brahman family has been put into straightened circumstances owing to litigation. They have lost every plot of their land. and even their own homesteads are claimed by their money-lenders.

The powers of the Union Board to try cases have had the effect, to some extent, of encouraging litigation.

Disputes are usually tried to be settled by arbitration outside the court by the zemindars or other influential persons of the village. There is no such thing as Arbitration Board although some attempts are being made in this direction by some educated persons of the village. After the new powers of the Union Board, the majority of village disputes are brought to it for trial and only certain disputes are brought before the zemindars for amicable settlement, the reason being that suits practically cost nothing in view of the altered position of the Union Board.

Old men always complain of the present days From the economic point of view, there has been material improvement. It is a matter of regret, however, that the cottage industry has fallen into decline; some industries practically have gone out of existence. Notwithstanding these it is a fact that some of the principal industries have completely revived to their former position and prestige. This aspect of the question has been dealt with elsewhere in this enquiry. It is a matter of dispute whether the produce of the village has increased more in recent times than

in the past, but one thing is clear that the consuming power of the masses has noticeably increased. Moreover, the improvement of communications between the two chief industrial centres of Bengal, *i.e.*, Calcutta and Dacca, has completely changed the whole course of trade of the village. Large quantities of fish and milk-made articles are regularly exported to these centres, which, no doubt, seriously tells upon the produce available for the everyday consumption of the villagers. Prices of these articles have increased to the detriment of the so long undisturbed privileges of the villagers. But the general conditions of these trading people have become better than ever. Of course, every system has its defects and the economic transition of the village has in some cases given undue advantages to a portion of the trading people of means over the poorer sections of the occupation.

One feature of the present-day agriculture is important. That is the rotation or change of crops. This is particularly applicable to the jute crop. Jute gives ready money to the cultivator in the beginning of the rainy season, but makes him dependent upon other cultivators or traders for the staple foods. It has been contended by some that the production of jute leads to economic improvement and that jute should be adopted *in toto* where the cultivators produce paddy along with jute either in the same plot of land or in separate plots. This year less jute but more staple products have been produced, which has led to better condition of the farmers.

The serious defect of the industries of the village is their excessive dependence upon middlemen. Some of the principal trades of the villagers are in the hands of middlemen. They absorb the major portion of the gain. In the case of the weavers, pressure of middlemen who

supply them in some instances with capital, is really hard. They take the finished products from those to whom they advance money, and give them less money in return. Even some of the goldsmiths take the help of these middlemen for the purchase of metals, etc. The milk and fish trade are not exempt from their influence though not to a serious degree. Jute and pulses pass through their hands. The remedy suggested is co-operation which is conspicuous by its absence in the village.

The village from the point of view of agriculture is producing to its utmost capacity. No uncultivable lands (except the play-ground) are available ; nor is there any decrease of cultivable lands. Indeed more lands are wanted in the vicinity of the village. Population is greater than the producing capacity of the village ; the Irol Bill has been a great help in supplying paddy, etc. (The Irol Bill is outside our village).

Buying of lands takes place for the purpose of producing crops by the buyers. The lands in the village are a property on which many of the villagers solely depend for their subsistence. People with sufficient savings proceed to buy lands as provision for the future and for their children after their death. People never sell their lands except when they are in difficulty. Sometimes they are goaded to selling lands through indebtedness.

It has already been noticed that some of the educated persons both of public services and other professions have emigrated to cities. Although the sanitary conditions and food supply of the village are good, causes of their emigration are professional convenience that arise from permanent residence in towns and sometimes higher standard of living and the development of needs which could not be met here. Both socially and economically the village has become poor from this point of view. Socially their influence, their counsel and guidance

would have been a great asset to the villagers; economically, the village has been bereft of their knowledge of outside world, their organizing capacity and their capital. But from the intellectual side their loss is even more deplorable. The conservatism, the narrowness of mind, selfishness and want of knowledge could have been eradicated with their help and leadership, and the standard of thinking and action could have been improved.

In recent years, after the great European War, the standard of living of the villagers has improved a great deal. Even before that the change was noticeable, no doubt, but it has been quite marked after the war period. In the past the villagers as a rule were satisfied with a simple fare and dress. Mention has already been made that ornaments both gold-made and silver-made are used by almost every person of means, whereas in the past they were the monopoly of only the higher classes. Shoes, richer clothes, and umbrellas are possessed by the depressed classes even. But the most marked of all is the spread of the use of piecegoods and other commodities imported from Great Britain, Germany and Japan which have been brought within the means and reach of every villager. In recent years some quite unnecessary, though insignificant to civilised eyes, Japan- and German-made fancy goods of little cost have been found in the hands of our boys and girls. The point on which special attention must be drawn is the use by the villagers, of utensils manufactured abroad. Whereas in the past earthenware and plantain leaves were the main articles that the villagers used in their everyday life (especially and in every case by those who belong to other classes than Brahmins and rich Kayasthas), now every one of them have a number of aluminium, german-silver, or tin utensils besides occasional use of brass, copper and other country-made wares. Does

it imply that there has been a rise in their standard of living? Whatever the answer may be, there is no denying the fact that the tastes of the villagers have seen a complete change in recent years. For two or three years, some progressive villagers tried to stop the use, in the village, of palanquins to convey the ladies from one homestead to another where they are invited for feasts or on ceremonial occasions; but their attempt provoked opposition from the conservative quarters.

K. Organizations, Sports, etc.

It will not be out of place here to add something on the village organization. Last year we set up an organization in the village consisting of members from the old and young, which aims at improving the conditions of the village socially, intellectually and economically. As the first step we have organized a "Village Defence Corps" to protect the villagers from burglars, thieves, and more particularly, from the morally degraded people. Under the guidance of a strong and experienced man two batches, each consisting of four young men with lathis, watch the village every night. A gymnasium has been set up. One library will soon be founded. Sports will be conducted from the organizations and separate office-bearers have been elected from the young men to guide every separate activity. But we have been seriously handicapped for want of money, because funds are inadequate and old men's sympathy is not found to be purse-deep. However great may be the difficulty, the young men of the village are determined to make the experiment a successful one.

GOILA (BACKERGANJ)

By

HIMANGSUKUMAR GUPTA.

A. Physical Description.

In the lower valley of the Ganges lies the village Goila, 27 miles to the north of Barisal, the headquarters of the district.

The *Padmapuran*, the semi-historical myth of the Hindus, refers to " Goila or Manasi as the most favourite resort of Manasa, the Goddess of serpents and hence the name." "This place has been named Goila, because here resided distinguished grammarians like Trilochan Das, Kabindra, etc.'' There is another reference in the same work : " this place was known as Pandit Nagore, because here was the residence of Brahmins who knew all the four Vedas, Baidyas and Kayasthas.'' [1]

In fact we find big plots of lands with ruins of buildings and houses and still known by the names of " Rajpandit's house,'' " Kabindra's park,'' etc.

The nearest forests are the Sundarbans, about 75 miles to the south and south-east from Goila.

Being situated in the lower valley of the Ganges there are no hills in the neighbourhood or even within a distance of 150 miles, the nearest ones being the Tipperah hills to the north-east at a distance of 350 miles.

Backerganj is a river district. The whole district is a network of rivers. The village Goila has two rivers on both sides—east and west. On the east flows the river Ghandeswar, a tributary of the Padma, and on the west

[1] *Padmapuran*, p. 4.

flows the river Madhumati. The *Padmapuran* says that the village itself was on the banks of the Padma, which has in course of time changed its course leaving only a branch—Ghandeswar. In fact, there is a place in Goila named 'Jahajghata' or the steamer ghat, which clearly shows that this place was on the banks of a river.[1]

The nearest railway station is Khulna, about 50 miles away from Goila. The steamer service forms the only means of communication, the station being situated at a distance of 3½ miles east of the village. There are local board roads up to the station. By the side of the road runs the canal by which communication is possible. The steamers are daily run.

As Goila is in the district of Backerganj, it is directly under the headquarters, Barisal, under the police station of Gouinandi and in the Pargana of Bakla.

B. Population.

The total population of the village is about 15,000. An account of the population by caste, sex and age is given in percentage below :

	Brahmins.	Baidyas.	Others.
(*a*) Caste	25	45	30

	Males.	Females.
(*b*) Sex	51	49

	50 upwards.	25 to 50.	12 to 25.	Below 12.
(*c*) Age	13·5	30	25	31·5

[1] Ghagar has changed its course and is about 13 miles west of Goila.

The term ' others ' in (*a*) Caste—includes Kayasthas, Namasudras, Barbers, Washermen, Blacksmiths, Goldsmiths, Goalas, Potters, etc.

The population of the village is increasing, though slowly. The increase is the greater in males than in females. The males are generally healthy ; 60 per cent. of the population can safely be declared to be of good health. One cause for the increase of population is that the rate of infant mortality is very low.

The number of families in the village is from 750 to 900 and the number of homesteads in the village are 2,500 or thereabouts.

To ascertain the exact conditions of the village, statistics are being taken by some young men of the village since last year. It will, probably, take another six months to complete the same.

An account of the age of marriage of different castes is given below :—

	Brahmins.	Baidyas.	Kayasthas.	Sudras.	Blacksmiths.
Boys	13-30	19-28	13-21	13-22	13-21
Girls	9-14	14-19	11-14	11-14	11-14

Since these five castes form the majority of population of the village, the ages of marriage are given only as pertaining to these castes.

Yet all the quarters have more than these five castes. Every quarter or ward, as we may call it, may be said to be self-contained and has, for example, its own barbers, washermen, blacksmiths and Goalas along with a greater number of families of the above five castes. And in spite of this fact, there are actually some quarters where a

particular caste may be said to be localised ; *e.g.*, in Vaidic Para, Brahmins occupy 95 per cent. of the homesteads, in Sen Para Baidyas cover 80 per cent. of the population or as in Kamarpara, Blacksmiths and Goldsmiths are of the greatest number. Up to this time there has been no communal tension. It is curious to note that even when the Kulkati firing unsettled the Muslim community to the highest degree, Goila Muslims kept their heads cool and maintained their usual brotherly feelings.

C. Sanitation.

In spite of a fair-sized population Goila enjoys a comparative immunity from epidemics. Malaria has been identified with the Bengal village. The total annual number of cases of Malaria seldom exceeds 125.

During the months of April and May a few cases of Cholera are reported and that too, not every year. It was in 1926 that Cholera levied a toll of about 100. Small-pox is rare. Other diseases are *nil.* It is a great thing in a village that medical assistance is always available. There are general Allopathic doctors, a few Homeopathic M.B.'s and many Kabirajes. As regards dispensaries, the village has three Allopathic stores of drugs and medicines, which are kept open day and night. Homeopathic stores number about 7. The village has all the conveniences of a town. Sanitation at Goila is not perfect. The privies of the villagers are most insanitary. They are constructed by the side of the houses. The result is that this neglect on the part of the people poisons the surrounding atmosphere. The system of service privies is not possible in this village as there is not a single family of Methar. Keeping as great a distance as possible between residential quarters and latrines as some families are doing, is the only safe course left.

D. *Water Supply.*

Another difficulty felt by the villagers in general is as regards the water supply. In a large number of cases, drinking water is taken from the tanks. These tanks might be used for many purposes or almost covered with water hyacinths. Others again take water from the canal as running water is considered less dangerous. The number of good tanks will not exceed 100, and a village of this size requires at least 500 good tanks. Every family has got its own tanks, one or more. Some even have 6 tanks and in most cases all of them are full of weeds.

It is a regrettable fact that the villagers have hardly any idea of the risks they are running in taking water indiscriminately from the tanks in which they bathe. Somethitg should be done to prevent the villagers from being so careless about their drinking water.

The remedy is simple. Filthy and stagnant pools should immediately be cleared by co-operation if not through individual effort. Or they may even introduce the system of Reserve Tanks. Another remedy may be suggested. The villagers may dig wells and Indaras or even may own tube wells individually.

Mosquitoes, as a result of filthy, stagnant pools and jungles, are increasing day by day. Snakes are rare and whenever seen are killed at once.

The main drainage is the canal with its branches, dug out by the District Board and connected with Ghandeswar and Ghagar.

In spite of the insanitary habits of the villagers, they are on the whole rich as regards their housing conditions in general. The buildings number about 2,000. Corrugated iron houses are about 700 to 800 and the rest are either made of thatch or of *Golpata.*

E. Land: Agricultural and Non-agricultural.

If a stranger were to visit Goila, he would probably be astonished to find almost no cultivable, cultivated and even fallow land within the area of the village. The area of the village itself is about 16 sq. miles. Of this again only one-fifth of the land is always scattered except a few plots in the northern and north-western part of the village. It is because of this scattered nature of the cultivated land that it does not attract one's attention.

The village is fortunate in that there are no fallow and jungly lands within the village.

The service of the canal is highly appreciated in regard to agriculture. Problems of water supply in the lands never arise because the canal with its innumerable outlets is supplying water to the fields throughout the season.

There is no zemindar in this village. There are many Talukdars who own Taluks in different places and even at distances of 45 miles or more. The result is that no improvement with regard to agriculture is made by them since none of them likes to suffer alone.

F. Agriculture.

The principal crops of the village are paddy and jute. *Dal* is also found in some cases. Paddy sells from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 and jute from Rs. 5-8 to Rs. 10 per maund.

The area yielding one crop per annum is difficult to say. About two-thirds of the total land yield one crop per annum and the rest two crops. There is no land that yields 3 crops per annum.

Stocks are kept generally in a thatched house near the dwelling house of the cultivator.

The pair of oxen which are kept for ploughing are well taken care of. They have an entirely separate and clean shed. To protect them from mosquitoes or bites of insects mosquito-curtains are largely used, almost by most of the cultivators. It may be safely stated that the oxen are in a sound condition and are generally of a healthy type.

The usual fodder for cattle is rice-gruel and grass or hay. One of the difficulties is the absence of a common pasturage. Of course a common pasturage is not of great importance in Goila because there are many grassy lawns here and there where cows and oxen can graze. During the winter both cows and oxen are wrapped with gunny pieces. In the rainy season, no cattle are let loose and the fodder then is grass, which is sold in large quantities in the local market or bazaar.

In most cases, the villagers breed their own cattle. On occasions villagers buy cattle from Tarkibandar, a neighbouring commercial centre where bi-weekly *hats* assemble. The price seems to be very low as compared with that in other places. A good cow may be bought for Rs. 20.

Manure is scarcely used. Sometimes cowdung and sometimes burnt stubble which remain in the fields act as manure.

It is unfortunate that the cultivators are not receiving material assistance from the Agricultural or the Veterinary Departments. In consequence, agricultural operations are carried on quite as of old with little improvement in method, cost or output.

To a cultivator the cost of cultivating a *bigha* does not exceed Rs. 12 as the cultivators work with their own implements.

The selling price of the land changes from Rs. 110 to Rs. 170 and sometimes even Rs. 200.

G. Village Industries.

Goila is rich in industries, weaving, spinning, metal-working, soap-making, pottery, gunny-bag-making and rope-making forming the chief industries of the village.

Weavers number about 250, spinners 350, black-smiths and goldsmiths and other metal workers 700 or more, bag and rope makers 150.

Though all of these are cottage industries practically, yet the importance of each of them individually cannot be ignored. Each has its markets both in and outside the village. Some have even transactions in markets about 20 miles distant from the village.

Being cottage industries the men employed are all whole-timers except soap-makers and gunny-bag and rope makers who devote only 4 or 5 hours a day to their occupations.

These industries are developing. Each of them has a market outside with a great demand for Goila-made things and this extra demand is responsible for the prosperity of the cottage industries.

H. Village Trade.

The smaller trades of the village are confined to jute, rice, *pan* and tobacco, the last being maintained on imported tobacco.

Only a part of the village produce is consumed by the villagers. A large part is sent to markets outside by means of boats and steamers. Boats heavily loaded either with rice or jute or tobacco are a usual sight in the canals. The steamer station is about 4 miles east of the village.

I. *General Economic Condition of the Village.*

The number of families dependent on agriculture is about 170. Persons depending on agriculture number about 1,105. Among these about 70 families are wholly dependent on agriculture for livelihood.

About 250 families depend upon cottage industries for their livelihood.

Beggars number about 150. The exact number of those who live on charity is impossible to state. So far as I know it may not exceed 15 or 20. There are at least 500 field labourers and 300 labourers of different kinds. The wages of labourers are as follows:—

Barbers.	Washermen.	Carpenters.	Masons.
1 anna per head.	60 pieces of cloth per rupee.	12 annas to Re. 1 a day.	Re. 1 to Rs. 4 a day.

Wood-cutters.	Thatchers.	Tank-cleaners.
As. 12 per day.	As. 10 to as. 12 a day.	Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 5-8 per day.

Tank-cleaners work sometimes on contract system; they make contracts with the owner of the tank as to the total remuneration for cleaning the tank instead of daily wages.

About 6,000 men live outside the village for a large part of the year and earn their living in professions such as service.

Teachers and pleaders each number about 100 and persons working as labourers in factories in cities may not probably exceed 50. Persons serving under *Talukdars* and *Mahajans* number about 200.

There are about 100 men in the Civil Service—provincial and subordinate. There are 4 men in the Provincial Judicial Service. The cultivators, in leisure hours, take care of oxen, would probably go to the priest to listen to religious sermons or probably would speculate

along with other cultivators. Very often a cultivator is seen fishing with a net on his shoulders and a naked girl of eight or nine years with a basket following him to collect the fish caught and sell them in the bazaar. In slack seasons many cultivators become fishermen.

They thus utilise their time and energy in earning something in slack seasons. Others again become boatmen who too earn a good amount of money.

The young men of the village have a strong tendency to emigrate to the towns. With the education available in the village they are attracted to the towns for service. The villagers know that towns are more paying than the villages—although the majority of them are not aware that by this emigration and service they are ruining themselves morally and physically.

Rice sells from Rs. 4-8 to 5-12 per maund (Nov. 1928). Price of *dal* ranges from Rs. 8 to Rs. 9-8 per maund. Milk sells at 0-1-3 per seer. The price of milk comes down to 9 pies even during winter but is again raised to even 3 as. during summer. Vegetables are plenty and cheap except those that are brought from outside.

The percentage of people making savings is extremely small. The Baidyas form the bulk of the population and they are inordinately extravagant in their habits. The desire for false prestige has a strong hold over them and debts due to living beyond means are common. Those carrying on their own calling in life such as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, etc., are noticed to be considerably frugal and as such much better off in life. The total number of families making savings will not in any case exceed 450—majority of them having no bank accounts. Some invest money in lending at a heavy rate of interest. Others hoard in kind as well as in coins. Persons having bank accounts would not exceed 50.

It is almost impossible to give a correct figure of persons in debt. As a matter of fact this weakness in men is always kept concealed until it somehow leaks out. An estimate of 90 per cent. of the Baidyas and 10 per cent. of other castes in debt, is not, I believe, far wide of the mark.

The causes of indebtedness may partly be attributed to unemployment and mostly to living beyond means. The expenses of marriage have been always on the increase due to social customs. It is a matter for serious consideration whether society can really in the face of such ugly customs be called advancing or retrograding. Marriage expenses, Sraddhas and other religious ceremonies are some of the outstanding causes of indebtedness. The Bhadraloks are, as a matter of fact, the worst offenders in this respect. The lower classes, if in good health (which they are in generally), hardly find any difficulty—there being no want of menial occupations.

There are about 40 mahajans who lend money at a high rate of interest. The rate of interest ranges from 24 per cent. to 60 per cent. per annum. Besides these heavier rates of interest, mortgage of property, ornaments and the like are usual. It has rightly been said that the real enemies of the village are litigation, mahajans, malaria, false show of prestige, luxury and social customs.

There is no co-operative society in Goila. This is a serious drawback. Attempts to start one co-operative society have not yet borne fruit. The main difficulty in this respect is that the educated section of the village is absent always and the sense of co-operation has not yet fully grown up in the villagers. Incurring of bad debt is always apprehended and that has delayed it so long.

The wants are on the increase among the villagers. Some even require flashlights at dusk sometimes. The Jatras take away at least Rs. 300 a year.

The number of persons paying income-tax is 100 and those paying Chowkidary taxes will be about 750. The village *panchayat* is realising the Chowkidary taxes which are fixed by the respectable and important gentlemen of the village who are supposed to be familiar with the economic conditions of the family. The rate fixed by them is considered binding and as such payable.

Persons possessing life insurance policies are not many. The people living in villages have not yet fully understood the necessity of investing money in life insurances. Lately, owing to the enterprise of some respectable gentlemen of the village having taken up the agency of several companies, people are gradually inclined to take advantage of this system. The total number of men having policies is about 300.

J. Education.

There is one English High School, one branch school where standards up to the 4th class are taught, one middle Vernacular school for girls, one Sanskrit College and several *Pathsalas*. The total number of school- and Pathsala-going boys and girls are 1,400 or so. Nearly four-fifths of the adult population are able to read and write vernacular and nearly 45 per cent. of the adult population is able to read and write English. And if by highly educated men we mean graduates and upwards, the number is only about 350, out of which the M.A.'s, the M.Sc.'s, and agricultural, engineering and medical graduates will number about 100. This account refers to English-educated men only. There is a fairly large

number of Sanskrit scholars too, who are Byakarantirthas, Kabyatirthas, Sankhyatirthas, Vedantatirthas, etc.

Boys having good education residing in the village are very small in number, because the village hardly offers sufficient scope to them. If one is to remain at home he has got to starve for want of profitable employment. The few that are living at home are engaged in the village school, Congress office or the public reading room and the nursing club.

There are several small libraries and there is a good collection of books in the school library. There is also a free reading room for the public where magazines and newspapers may be had. I must thank the young men who have sacrificed much for starting a nursing club and gymnasium where lathi play is taught also. There are a few debating clubs organised by the students.

K. Village Administration.

The village is under the administration of a *panchayat*. Crimes in the village are not many in comparison with other places. Stray cases of theft or burglary take place sometimes. But the villagers had a great surprise last year when they heard of a pickpocket who managed to make one gentleman's pocket lighter by taking away Rs. 150 in notes. During the year before the last 3 dacoities took place in the village.

Litigation is not very common now-a-days. As far as practicable people settle disputes by arbitration. There are only a few families in the village who have been ruined due to debts incurred in consequence of litigation in the past.

L. Outlook.

It is difficult really to state with any degree of accuracy whether the village has improved in its economic

condition or grown worse off. If contentment and few wants may be taken as test of happiness the past may then be unhesitatingly pronounced as much happier than the present. The people at that time were extremely home-loving and all their energies were concentrated there. They knew little of enterprise or adventure beyond their environment and were highly content with coarse diet and simple clothing. Cottage industries flourished and it was a universal aim with all the villagers to be self-sufficient. Almost all the families possessed their immediate necessities—their lands smiled with plenty and supplied them with more than their yearly needs—the family cows supplied them with plenty of milk—out of which they prepared butter, curd and ghee, unadulterated. The tanks abounded in fishes of various kinds and every villager knew something of fishing. In consequence no want was experienced by the people. The charka and the handloom produced clothes and the people were happy in every respect. The village communities are little republics having really everything they want within themselves.

The principal food of the villagers are :—

Milk, Rice, Dal, Vegetables, Fish	50%
Rice, Dal, Vegetables, Fish	30%
Rice, Dal, Vegetables	20%

PEDONG BLOCK

By M. K. Pradhan—IV-Year Student

General Features.

The village is situated in the Kalimpong Government Estate, a sub-division of the district of Darjeeling, and is merely a revenue and administrative unit. There is no corporate village life here, such as there is in the plains. Each homestead stands on its own land, and in very rare cases 5 or 6 houses are grouped together. The use of the term "block" for the area under the jurisdiction of each headman typifies the absence of corporate village existence.

This village of Pedong Block is cut up by ridges of varying heights and steepness which are separated from each other by valleys. There is no undulating country as one finds in Sikkim, the neighbouring state. The prominent peaks in this block is Dumsong 6,300 ft. on the inner range rising above the Tista. People say that there was a fort here of the Tibetans when they fought against the British. But no remnants now remain to prove its existence.

The elevation of a field has a large influence on its productivity. Rice will not grow at all above 5,000 ft. Cardamom seldom grows above 4,000 ft. and the outturn of maize, the staple food crop of the village, grows considerably less above that elevation without any compensating improvement in quality. Water is more scarce

on high lands and the crops ripen late, so that a cultivator cannot get the favourable prices obtainable by getting the produce early into the market. Accordingly, the highlands though much healthier than the low lands are not so much sought after by the people. Money is preferred to health.

The chief rivers of the Block are the Rishi river dividing the Estate on the north from Sikkim territory and the Mayrong between this block and the Kagay Block. In addition to the above there are numerous smaller streams. The rivers are all useless and not navigable. Fish is found in these rivers and tastes better than that of the plains but the Forest Department does not permit fishing in any river. Within the first few hundred feet above the river bed the land is usually very steep and is partially covered with trees and brushwood even in the most closely cultivated tracts. Cultivation in such places is a frequent cause of landslips. Cultivation on steep slopes and the felling of trees in such places are prohibited by the *Khas Mahal* authorities to prevent landslips. A greater portion of land here gets the benefit of the morning and noon-day sun, so the lands are fertile here.

The railway station is 22 miles away from this block. The cart road extends from Kalimpong Road Railway Station to Algorah, a village 4 miles off from here.

The name of this block is Pedong Block, the elevation of the Bazaar being 4,770 ft. It is under the Kalimpong Government Estate, a sub-division of the Darjeeling District. Pedong lies on the frontier. The Police Station is Kalimpong at a distance of 12 miles from here. There is a police outpost here with a head-constable and 3 policemen. No Europeans or Indians other than the hill-people are allowed to cross the boundary of Pedong and enter into Sikkim territory.

The total population of the village according to the Census of 1921 is as follows :—

Population.

	Number of Occupied Houses.	Male.	Female.	Total.
Pedong Bazaar	98	251	138	389
Pedong Bustee	223	503	537	1,042

As noted above there being no village here in the proper sense of the term, and the people being ignorant and owing to the difficult nature of the country, it is difficult to get all the information required. The density of population according to the Census of 1901 was 336 per square mile and, in 1921, 472 per square mile. The density has increased because Pedong is a fertile block on an easy slope, fairly warm and with a bazaar to effect the sales of produce.

The population chiefly consists of the Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas, the descendants of the original inhabitants of this country. In the bazaar are found 21 Marwaris, 18 Hindu plainsmen from Behar and the United Provinces and three Mahomedans. These hold only lands on which their shops stand. Agricultural land and the right to settle in the interior is reserved for the local hillraces, Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalis.

One of the main considerations in the management of the estate has been the protection, so far as is possible, of the Lepcha and Bhutia population, especially the former, from the consequences of their own extravagance and to prevent them from being displaced by their more thrifty Nepali neighbours. Ordinarily no sales of land by the Lepchas or the Bhutias are permitted except to a Lepcha or a Bhutia, though recently exceptions to

this rule have been allowed where the tenant is a debtor to a Co-operative Society and no Lepcha or Bhutia purchaser can be found.

It is interesting, therefore, to see the relative position of the various sections of the Pedong population. As it was not possible to get an up-to-date statistical statement, I use the last Census Report of the whole Estate for the purpose :

	Area held		No. of holdings.	Average.	Percentage of increase.
	1902.	1920.			
Lepchas	11,986	13,417	1,409	9·5	12
Bhutias	3,917	4,686	539	8·7	19
Nepalis	36,839	42,977	1,847	8·8	16

This shows that the area held by the Lepchas has increased by 12 per cent. But owing to the relatively greater increase in the area held by the Nepalis, the Lepchas now hold 21·2 per cent. of the settled land as against 22 per cent. in 1902. The increase was due to the settlement of Khas land with the Lepchas but now the supply of cultivable Khas lands having diminished, there is a gradual decrease of the Lepcha population (at least in the better part of the estate, the area from Kalimpong to Pedong Block). The headman is of opinion that there has been a steady decrease of the Bhutias and Lepchas here, though no exact statistical data were found to verify the statement.

The bulk of the population now consists of the Nepalis. The Nepalis are more thrifty and industrious than the Lepchas or the Bhutias, and have pushed out the latter from the best land to a considerable extent. A good many of them come from the tea-gardens and Assam with large savings, buy up good lands and settle. The increase of population is due to a large influx of Nepalis

from Eastern Nepal. The continued emigration from Nepal is due to the pressure of the population on the soil in Eastern Nepal and the impoverishment of the soil there. There is apparently in that country no forests acclaimed for cultivation by the Government. The land is in consequence over-cultivated, cattle are scarce and the soil is insufficiently manured. In some parts fuel is very difficult to procure, and dung being burnt as fuel it lessens still further the supply of manure available. One and not an infrequent cause of these migrations, is the death of a child in a house. The dwelling after such a calamity is left by the whole family.

The total number of homesteads according to the statement made by the headman of the viliage is 190 among which Nepalis have 115, Lepchas 10, Bhutias 56, Christians 7 and others 2.

The birth and death registers are kept here by the head-constable of the police outpost. There are Chowkidars appointed who come and report weekly the number of births and deaths during the week in their respective jurisdictions. The total number of deaths during the year 1927 was 21 in Pedong Bazaar and 31 in Pedong Bustee. The Register further gives 8 deaths at Pedong Bazaar and 19 deaths at Pedong Bustee, in the year 1928 up to 31st October, 1928.

It might be interesting to give the total number of births during the year 1927 which was 4 at Pedong Bazaar and 41 at Pedong Bustee and in the year 1928 up to 31st October, 1928, the total number of births registered at Pedong Bazaar was 4 and at Pedong Bustee 34 only.

Marriage among Lepchas are contracted in childhood, and the wife is purchased by money or by service rendered to the future father-in-law. The parties are often united before the woman leaves her parents' roof, in

cases where the payment is not forthcoming and where the bridegroom prefers giving his and his wife's service for a stated time in lieu thereof. On the expiration of the term of service or on the payment of the stipulated sum of money, the marriage is publicly celebrated with much feasting. The marriage tie is strictly kept and any violation is heavily punished by divorce, beating, slavery, etc. In cases of inter-marriages with foreigners the children belong to the father's race. All the labour of the house and the field devolve on the women and children.

Among the Nepalis there are different races such as Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Newars, Mangars, Gurungs, Limboos, etc. Except with the Brahmans, the minimum age of marriage is 20 for a boy and 16 for girls, according to the religious rites and ceremonies of the Hindu Sastras. Dowry system is not prevalent among these people although the girl's father if he wishes may give ornaments, etc., to his daughter, but it is by no means compulsory. The Brahmans observe the institution of child-marriage. Infants of tender age, ignorant of any responsibility are given in marriage but thanks to the present-day influence, this evil system is slowly decaying. The *Purdah* system is not very rigidly observed except in high families. Polyandry is not practised but polygamy prevails. Marriages are always between people of the same caste. Among the Bhutias, strictly speaking, the tie is not a serious affair. Polyandry is a recognised institution amongst the Bhutias. The Lamas or priests form a large proportion of this population, among whom some marry and some remain unmarried and are given to religious devotion. Child-marriage is unknown among them. The marriages according to religious rites and ceremonies are held among noble families only at sufficiently advanced ages.

There is no localisation of castes here. The Nepalis, Bhutias and Lepchas, the inhabitants of the place, live in the same village in separate quarters by themselves. No communal tension is noticed here.

Sanitary Conditions of the Village.

On account of its higher elevation it may almost be pronounced that this block is free from epidemic diseases of any kind except goitre, which is by no means widespread. People say that in some places water is defective; so cases of goitre are prevalent and a little application of iodine cures it in no time. The Assistant Surgeon of the local charitable dispensary opines that the scarcity of iodine in water causes goitre. Many Nepalis who go to the *tarai* become victims of malaria but there is no reason to believe that these places have become more unhealthy. Some years ago epidemics of small-pox were common, but with vaccination the disease has diminished. Cholera sometimes pays occasional visits. For some years cases of tuberculosis have from time to time been admitted in the local hospitals. I am given to understand that the damp climate of the place and the carelessness of the people during illness have something to do with it. Generally speaking, the usual complaints are about bowels, chest, and skin.

The Lepchas are usually healthy. They very much dread small-pox. They administer a kind of mountain herb as medicine, but their faith is in the sorcerer. A sorcerer is called in who declares the illness attributable to the displeasure of a certain evil spirit whom he names; the spirit has to be appeased by the blood of some animal designated by him—sheep, goat or poultry—which, of course, after the sacrifice becomes the property of the

sorcerer together with the knife and all things used in the performance of the rite. If the patient gets well, the sorcerer's reputation is enhanced and he gets some presents besides; if he does not succeed, other sorcerers are called in who assert that the wrong spirit has been sacrificed to. He names another, and the same process is repeated, out of the farm stock of the family. The Nepalis and Bhutias are also firm believers in sorcery, and have recourse to the same sacrifice of farm stock for the propitiation of evil spirits. The idea of utilising medical help is only gradually developing.

There is a charitable dispensary here. It is under the charge of a Sub-Assistant Surgeon. Indoor patients as well as out-door patients are treated here. Government contribution towards the dispensary is half the pay of the Sub-Assistant Surgeon; all other expenses are borne by the District Board.

The people on account of poverty mostly live in houses which are very often quite ill-ventilated with one or two holes as ventilators. Cattle is often kept near the houses. The Lepchas and Bhutias keep pigs.

The village is suffering from want of sufficient water for drinking purposes. One has to walk a long distance for water. In the bazaar water is reserved and brought in a pipe but here also water is scarce. The people have repeatedly approached the authorities without success. If water is brought from Dunesong, there will be sufficient water for drinking and irrigation purposes. Often the villagers have to depend on rainfall for rice cultivation. The spring water is collected and brought out by means of bamboo pipes and the people use the same spring water for bathing and washing purposes.

Snake-bites are not uncommon here. Recently there was a case of snake-bite and the patient died after a couple of days. The people are generally bitten while cutting

grass or cultivating cardamom. The villagers use a kind of herb and some, who pretend to cure, utter some *mantras* to prevent poison being circulated in the system. People residing near the bazaar bring the patient to the hospital and get medical help.

A Nepali abode is a very simple thatched structure, built with a dozen or so of bamboo or wooden posts. The walls are of split bamboos plastered over with mud. In some cases stone walls are erected though the roof is thatched. There is only one large room, a small portion of which is partitioned off for women and children. The large room itself has three recognised divisions :—first, where the family bed is placed ; second, the kitchen room and sleeping room ; and third, a place for the guests of the same caste. In the verandahs, hospitality is offered to travellers of different castes or different religions, who may not, of course, enter the room where the caste people take their food. Light penetrates into the house only through the door, or through small openings made into the walls.

There are only 9 stone-built houses with corrugated-iron roofs in the villages outside the bazaar. In the bazaar all shops and houses are made of wood and corrugated-iron roofs. The Nepalis keep their houses quite neat and tidy, as the first duty of the woman of the house in the early morning is to clean the whole house thoroughly. There is very little of furniture in the house except some wooden beds, stools or chairs made at home.

The Nepali houses are constructed on the ground, whilst those of the Lepchas and Bhutias are raised on strong wooden posts.

The food of the Lepchas and Bhutias are hill rice, Indian corn, pulses, vegetables, fish, beef, pork and fowls. They drink *murwan* (unfermented hill beer) at any time and in any quantity available. The Lepchas are very fond of jungle vegetable products which grow

in the hills in large quantities. The food of the Nepalis is also similar except that beef is excluded and that the method of cooking is superior to that of the Bhutias and Lepchas. The Nepalis take curds, milk and *ghee*, if available.

An average family consists of 6 persons. An average holding for such a family will be as follows :—

Panikhet—2 acres.
Sukha Khet—6 acres.
Waste-land—50 acres.

Receipts.

From the two acres of terraced field the family gets about 40 maunds of paddy or 20 maunds of husked rice. Allowing for the rice used for food and paddy for seed, a quantity of about 8 maunds, the sale-proceeds of the balance of 12 maunds of rice selling at Rs. 10 per maund bring about Rs. 120. From the 6 acres of unterraced fields the family will have on the average 36 mds. of maize and 36 mds. of Kods or Marua of the plains.

The sale proceeds of 8 mds. of Maize @ Rs. 4-8 amounting to Rs. 36.

" " 16 mds. Marua @ Rs. 4 amounting to Rs. 64.

They sell poultry or eggs or farm produce, earn by manual labour in other fields or roads or saw timber

and cut firewood or in other way enjoy an yearly income amounting to Rs. 110. An average family has, therefore, an expectation of an annual income of Rs. 310.

Expenditure.

	Rs.	A.
Cost of cultivation of 2 acres of terraced fields @ Rs. 10 ...	20	0
Rent of 2 acres of terraced field @ Re. 1 ...	2	0
Cost of cultivation of 6 acres of unterraced fields @ Rs. 5 ...	30	0
Rent of 6 acres of unterraced field @ As. 14	5	4
One pair of oxen	70	0
Meat, salt, spices, tobacco, oil, etc.	20	0
New clothes at Dashara	40	0
House repairs and depreciation	9	0
Implements depreciation	3	2
Religious ceremonies	15	0
Mama tax unless Brahmin or Cheti	2	0
Wedding, funerals, etc....	60	0
TOTAL	277	0

Land, Agricultural and Non-Agricultural.

This block covers an area of 1,408·03 acres of land, out of which the net cropped area is 1,043·46 acres and the fallow land (not jungly) is 91·52 acres, of which current fallow is 12·51 acres and cultivable area other than current fallow is 79·01 acres. There are forests reserved for grazing, fuel and fodder, the total area of which is 56·37 acres. The cultivable lands have increased owing to the new settlement in the *Khas* lands. But the settlement of *Khas* lands is practically closed for ever.

Settlement of *Khas* lands is now made in very rare cases to ex-soldiers or persons whose lands elsewhere have been acquired by Government or destroyed by landslips.

Streams are used for water supply for agricultural purposes, there being no tanks or wells here. The total irrigated area as regards crops is 296·81 acres. The only crops regularly irrigated are cardamoms and terraced rice. Pedong Block has only 1·46 acres of cardamom-producing land. The irrigation canals for cardamom fields are constructed between October and May, those for rice fields between May and September. The former are taken from the larger streams near the bottom of the valleys ; the latter from streams and springs on the hill-sides wherever found. The irrigation works are all carried on by the villagers. The right to irrigation gives rise to many disputes in years when the rainfall is scanty. Such disputes are decided by the executive authorities under the provisions of the lease.

The Government is the proprietor of the estate. There is a manager at Kalimpong. The raiyats pay their rent direct to Government through their headman. As defined by his lease the raiyat's position may be summarised as follows :—

(1) The land is not transferable or may not be sublet without the express permission of the executive authority.

(2) The tenants must surrender without compensation their lands for a public purpose, compensation for trees only being awarded as fixed by the Deputy Commissioner.

(3) The rent is fixed for 15 years from 1st April, 1921, but the rates and conditions may be revised at settlement. In default of payment of rents the raiyats' movable and immovable property is liable to sale and the lease may be cancelled.

(4) The tenants must supply provisions and coolies for Government purposes at market rates and they must also supply two days' labour free of charge for each adult male or female living on his land, for road-making purposes.

(5) The tenants have no exclusive right to the use of any stream and cannot cut down trees of more than one foot in girth even in his own land. The Government has reserved to itself all rights and access to minerals, and the Deputy Commissioner can forbid any particular form of cultivation. The tenants cannot establish markets or *hats* within his lands.

The selling price of unterraced dry fields varies from Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 per acre, and of terraced fields from Rs. 200 Rs. 300 per acre according to fertility and situation. Sales which include only terraced fields or only unterraced dry fields are rare. There has, however, been of late a rise in the price of lands. The general low value of land is not, I think, due so much to bad agricultural conditions, such as steep slopes or poor soils, as to the fact that people prefer to avoid the excessively rainy climate of the blocks as also the difficulties of marketing owing to the general absence of good roads in this area. Hence the demand for the land is so small in the interior that prices are much below the intrinsic value of land measured by its annual yield. These disadvantages, however, are taken into consideration while fixing the rents in different blocks. The Government has put a restriction on the transfer of lands belonging to the Lepchas and the Bhutias; so they are experiencing difficulties in realising good prices for their lands. People generally sell their lands when the *mahajans* press them for debts. They fear their lands may be put to auction by the *mahajans* which will then go in at a comparatively low price; so they sell them themselves to clear the debts. The

Nepalis generally buy lands for settlement. They think that unless they have land and houses they will be nomads and they fear lest the coming generation might go a-begging. Their love for land is very great and they will spend more on land than on other things. A restriction is, however, recently put by the Government upon the purchase of lands. No tenant is allowed to hold more than 20 acres in the name either of himself or of any one of his family. The Government, however, allows larger holdings in cases of large families depending entirely on cultivation. The purchaser must swear in the court when purchasing a land that he has no land in excess of the limit and that, if found, he is willing to forfeit the same. All lands transferred or sold or mortgaged above the value of Rs. 100 is to be registered in the court of the Munsiff of Kalimpong. No one other than a hillman can buy lands. These restrictions are laid down to safeguard the interests of agricultural people.

The Census of 1921, the latest available, gives the following number of holdings occupied by different races :—

	Total area in acres.	Number of holdings.
Nepalis ...	641·91	78
Lepchas ...	70·57	10
Bhutias ...	314·22	56
Hillmen Christians ...	22·24	4
Roman Catholic Mission and others.	5·39	2
TOTAL ...	1,084·33	150

The average area of holdings accordingly is 7·18 acres.

Use of Lands.

All tenants here cultivate lands themselves. There are, generally speaking, few who sub-let all their lands. If any do sub-let, it is done with the permission of the executive authority but only in parts. I could not get any account of the tenants who own lands which they themselves cultivate and of the non-cultivating land-owners. As far as I could survey I found no non-cultivating land-owners and no agricultural workers who neither own nor cultivate lands. The following different kinds of sub-tenancy are prevalent here. The sub-tenants, however, do not form a class by themselves but those tenants who have not sufficient land become sub-tenants of other large land-owners. First, the sub-tenant pays all costs of cultivation, except the rent, and reaps all the profits, in return for which he pays a fixed money-rent to the land-owners. In this case the sub-tenant is known as *Pakhuria* and the rent is generally moderate. Secondly, the sub-tenant pays as rent a certain fixed quantity of produce per year, the sub-tenant pays all costs of cultivation, except the rent; in this case the sub-tenant is known as *Kutdar*. Thirdly, an arrangement is made by which the seed is deducted from the out-turn, and the balance divided between the raiyat and sub-tenant; in this case the sub-tenant is known as *Adhiar*. The third kind of sub-tenancy is only allowed with the permission of the executive authority but all forms are in vogue in this block without any one to report. At present the settlement of the land has been with the raiyats and no sub-tenancy has been recognised.

In addition to the three kinds of sub-tenancies mentioned above, there are two kinds of mortgages actually in vogue in this village. The first of these is known as *Masikata*, a mortgage in which the mortgagee holds

possession for a fixed term of years, by which possession, boththe principal and the interests of the debt are paid off. The second is styled *Biyazi*, in which the land mortgaged repays only the interests of the debt. Neither of these is recognised in the settlement rules. I could not get any exact account of the numbers of such sub-tenancies and mortgages, as no one admits of such arrangements not recognised by law.

It might be worth while to give some details of the assessment prevalent in the block. Lands are divided into five different classes which are groups of blocks according to fertility and general advantages. Pedong Block falls under class III. The *raiyati* land is again classified as—

Panikhet (terraced rice field).
Sukhakhet (unterraced rice field).
Waste (of over three years).
Cardamom.

They are now assessed per acre as follows :—

Class III—	Terraced rice fields—	Re. 1	per acre
	Unterraced rice fields—	14 as.	per acre
	Waste lands	—3 as.	per acre.

The rent of cardamom is fixed at Rs. 10 per acre throughout. The rents were enhanced in the new settlement of 1921. The Government argued that the productive powers of such land have increased, otherwise than by the agency, or at the expense, of the raiyats and that the value of the produce has accordingly increased. The Government compared the land rents in the vicinity of the Sikkim State and concluded that as the rents here were very low they must be increased.

The bazaar rent is different and is Rs. 2 per 100 square feet. The total rent of the Pedong Bustee is Rs. 911-11-0 and of Pedong Bazaar Rs. 909-5-0 for the the year 1927-28.

The principal crops of the village along with the details of cropped area of each are as follows :—

Crop.	Cropped Area.
Aus Paddy	11·34 Acres
Aman Paddy	295·35 ,,
Wheat	42·31 ,,
Ragi	43·39 ,,
Maize	706·69 ,,
Cardamom	1·46 ,,
Fruits and vegetables including root crops	0·07 ,,
	1,100·61 Acres.

The area cropped more than once is 57·15 acres and the net area cropped is 1,043·43 acres.

The out-turn of maize is dependent upon adequate rainfall in the months before the onset of the monsoon as also upon adequate manuring. Secondary crops which are grown on the same land in the same year, such as maize, include *lods* or *marwa*, buckwheat, mustard and other pulses. Of all these, *kodo* or *marua* does the best. The average out-turn per acre according to some villagers is 10 maunds. It fetches from Rs. 3-8-0 to Rs. 4-8-0 per maund. The most profitable crop which can be grown in the dry unterraced field is maize, followed by *kodo* or *marua*.

Wheat is chiefly grown by the Bhutias and Lepchas. The cardamom-producing area here is only 1·46 acres. So far as this crop is concerned it is good for the villagers as the production of this crop involves much labour under unhealthy conditions, and it is sold through middlemen who get an undue share of the profits. There is no jute cultivation here.

Paddy.

The area under rice cultivation had increased considerably. Wherever the slope is easy the raiyat, unless no stream or spring is anywhere near by, lays it out in rice terraces. But it will probably be found that the quantity of rice produced locally still bears only a small proportion to that of the maize. Rice is sold by small shopkeepers or by the villagers themselves on market days. Sellers of local rice at Pedong say that local rice sells at Rs. 8 to Rs. 10 per maund. Local rice, being of better quality, generally sells at a higher price than the imported common rice. Thus when imported rice sells at 7 seers, local rice sells at 5 seers per rupee.

According to a villager the average cost of preparing one maund of rice is as follows :—

	Rs.	As.	P
80 seers of paddy at Rs. 3-5-0 per md. average	6	10	0
Cost of husking	0	12	0
Cost of carriage to market	0	8	0
Cost of 1 md. of rice	7	14	0

Cultivators were asked what prices they obtained for paddy sold locally. They usually husk it and take small quantities of rice to the market according to their need for money. They say that during the months of October to the middle of November they sell at 4 seers per rupee and during the months of December and January they sell at 5 seers per rupee when the new paddy ripens and the price of paddy goes down.

Rice straw has become a valuable by-product in the neighbourhood of Pedong, where it is required for the mules coming from and going to Tibet. Large stocks

are collected by Bhutia cultivators from whom the mule drivers buy. The mule camping-ground near the market place was taken over by local Roman Catholic Mission Middle English School for their school play-ground and no suitable site near the bazaar is available. In consequence, all mule-owners enter villages by the side of the road where they get all kinds of comforts for themselves and fodder for their mules. The price of straw is lower at the house of the cultivator if he lives at some distance from the market, but it may be taken at least at Re. 1 per maund within a day's journey. Enquiries in the blocks showed that the price at the cultivator's house or at the place where it is thrashed, at Pedong is as. 12 per maund on the average. Pedong being situated on the mule route derives a good income from the sale of this by-product. If the profit is only 12 annas a maund and the out-turn on the average is 5 maunds of straw per acre, the profit from this by-product will be Rs. 3-12 per acre or $3\frac{3}{4}$ times the rent paid per acre in this block. Where the straw is not sold the cultivators use it as fodder for their own cattle.

Price of Maize.

It is difficult to obtain any account showing the price of maize, because hardly a dealer admits that he deals in it. The price of maize indicates a downward trend and the reason for the fall in the price of maize may be attributed to the great import of "chana" or "mattar" from Bihar and of maize from Bbutan. But that the normal price of maize is a little higher than what it was may be explained by the general rise in prices, coupled with the demand for maize to feed the mules bringing wool from Tibet. No appreciable amount of the export of maize is to be discerned. Oral statements of villagers show that the prices of maize vary

from Rs. 3-8 to Rs. 5 per maund. This is the time now when maize sells at Rs. 4 per maund. The mule is coming and going to Tibet and in consequence every week I found the price of maize going higher up and moreover at this time, the price of "chana" and "mattar" is higher than that of maize. It might be interesting to note that when the price of maize goes high the traders, nevertheless, get plenty of it.

Agricultural Implements.

The agricultural implements in use in this part consist of a plough which costs from Rs. 3-8 to Rs. 5. The body is made of *sal* or mulberry wood, weighing about 12 seers on the average and costs eight annas on the average. The pole is made of *sal*, mulberry or *panisaj* weighing about 5 seers and costing eight annas on the average. The yoke, made of *tuni* wood weighs about 1 seer. The share is made of iron, weighs about 12 chhataks, and costs eight annas. The pin joining the pole to the body is made of *chiluni* wood; the pegs in the yoke going over the bullocks' necks are made of bamboo or mulberry; the string fastening the pole to the yoke is usually made of buffalo hide and costs eight annas. The rope going round the bullocks' necks is made of jute. The iron pins which joins the body to the share is known as *Marua*. The complete plough weighs about 30 seers on the average. It is a good deal heavier than the average plough in the plains, since the hilly soil is stiffer, and the hill bullocks much more hardy than those below. The entire capital required for the purchase of a pair of plough oxen and the implements enumerated above may be set down at Rs. 75. Besides, the cultivators use the hoe, a curved knife for fencing and clearing jungles, a *kukri* or large knife for cutting bamboos, etc., and an axe for hewing down wood and a sickle.

The domestic animals consist of the oxen used in agriculture, buffaloes and cows kept for milk, sheep, goats and pigs (reared by the Bhutias and Lepchas only for meat) and ponies for sale or riding purposes. The animals are kept here in shelter during rainy and winter seasons. The cultivators especially, the Hindus, look after their cattle carefully and the cows are treated with reverence. The cattle show signs of recovery from the epidemic of rinder-pest which devastated the village a few years back. The cattle graze either in the reserved grazing forest or on the cultivators' own fields. The area of the reserved forest for grazing, fuel and fodder is 56·36 acres only in this block. This is quite insufficient for the cattle of the whole block. They are generally turned on the cultivator's own fields, the maize fields being utilised for pasturage for 2 or 3 months after the maize is cut, if not followed by the cultivation of *marua*. But when the maize is in the field again and until it is reaped the need of grazing as near as possible to the villagers' own houses is strongly felt by the cultivator. The nearest grazing field may be a long way off or, if near, inadequate. To have to take the plough-cattle a long way off is naturally a serious inconvenience and anything that can be done in the way of a village common pasturage at some moderate distance from the villagers' house, is a great gain especially during the months from March and September. If the Forest Department can spare a portion, I think it would satisfy the real needs of the villagers. For the cattle of the professional graziers, the reserved forest, however, offers, as a rule, accommodation, their number being too large for the village common pasturage. The village grazing grounds are reserved for plough-cattle and goats which they keep for their daily use. In the reserved forests the professional graziers are charged 8 annas for buffaloes and 4 annas for bullocks, cows and ponies per quarter.

The villagers give the cattle to eat powdered maize, oil-cake with salt, straw and green grass when available.

The plough-bullocks are sometimes Nepali, sometimes a cross between *Sia* and Nepali breeds, but occasionally the pure *siri* type is also met with. The latter, which are large and powerful animals, are owned mostly by the Bhutias and kept by them in the upper reserved forests, or used for cart traffic. There was a *siri* bull here kept by Government for breeding purposes but it is dead and another has not yet been brought. Anyhow the villagers take their cows to cross them with a *siri* bull, from one village to another where the latter is available and thus carry on cross-breeding. The old cows and buffaloes are brought by the Bhutias and Lepchas to be slaughtered for meat. An ordinary cow costs from Rs. 50 to Rs. 60, buffaloes from Rs. 150 to Rs. 160 and pigs from Rs. 20 to Rs. 30.

Milk is supplied in the market by villagers residing near by. The villagers in the interior prepare *ghee*, curds and bring them on the market-days, Milk sells here at 5 seers per rupee, butter at Re. 1-8 per seer and curds 3 annas per seer.

The dung of cows, sheep, goats, ponies and mules and such other wastes are stored and used as manure by cultivators. They don't spread raw manure but after some days of storage they spread it on fields. Manure is not burnt as fuel. All dry bushes are burnt on the field.

The cultivators are indebted to the Government for assistance in various departments of agricultural work. The maintenance of *siri* bulls for breeding purposes has been already mentioned. There is a Government Demonstration Farm at Kalimpong under the supervision of an officer of the Government Botanical Department with a recent branch at Pedong for experiment. In this farm experiments are made and seeds distributed to the villagers. Instruction on seed selection is provided

at Kalimpong to cultivators and school-children. Instruction in the conservation of manure in covered pits is also given by the superintendent of the Demonstration Farm in the outlying blocks. The cultivation of sugarcane is being encouraged by the Demonstration Farm. On experiment it was found that a profit of Rs. 577 has been realised on one acre which gave an out-turn of 64 maunds 30 seers of gur sold after manufacture at Rs. 11 per maund. Experiments are being conducted at the Demonstration Farm with Australian, Japanese and local fruit trees; seedlings and plants are distributed free of cost, and thus the cultivators are being encouraged in fruit-growing also. All the neighbouring villages of Kalimpong are being encouraged to grow vegetables for export to Calcutta and to provide the local hill markets.

But one of the chief methods by which agriculture in common with trade is stimulated is by the annual fair held in the first week of December every year at Kalimpong. Here prizes are given for grain, poultry, cattle, mules, ponies and all kinds of live-stock. An interesting section of the exhibition is that of machinery for silk-reeling, and agricultural instruments of English manufacture. The proceedings are enlivened by athletic sports, singing, dancing and other amusements. It is the chief event of the year to the village folk. The quiet hamlet of Kalimpong is filled with visitors from Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. It serves the double purpose of instructing and encouraging the cultivators, and of varying the dull round of agricultural toil. All the headmen of villages and other gentlemen subscribe towards the success of this fair.

In estimating the cost of cultivation it would be well to mention the different kinds of soil. There are three chief kinds of soil in order of fertility, namely, the black, the red and the white. The red soil requires much heavier and more

constant manuring to give as good an outturn as the black soil. The white soil is always poor. Land abounding in large rocks is generally composed of the black soil and gives especially good dry crops such as maize, *kodo* or *marua* of the plains. These different soils all mingle with each other in all degrees, and different shades of the mixed soils may be found in fields situated close together. Lands are also distinguished as sunny and shady, high and low (high lands being above 4,000 to 5,000 ft. and low lands below such elevation). The best out-turn of maize and rice are obtained in lands below 4,000 ft. but wheat, barley and other cold weather crops grow mostly in higher lands above 4,000 ft. and 5,000 ft. and cardamoms grow in shady ground in the low lands.

The most important crop in the village is maize, covering 706·69 acres of land in the block. It is the staple food of the mass, though the more prosperous inhabitants, and especially the town-folk, use the term maize-eater, "*makai khanewala*" with a contempt for the ordinary cultivator. It grows on almost any soil throughout the cultivated area between an elevation of 1,000 ft. and 7,000 ft. above sea level. Even in the terraced fields cultivators grow maize which is cut down at the time just before paddy growing. In many rocky places it grows very well. The black soil is generally preferred for maize cultivation, but the red soil if heavily and frequently manured will give excellent results. Sunshine being necessary, the branches of trees in the field are lopped off as far as possible. The crop is often damaged by bears and monkeys.

The gross cost of cultivating one acre of maize including the cost of seed when the out-turn is 6 maunds per acre may be estimated somewhat as follows. The most current village rates of wages are 6 annas for a man and 6 annas for a woman. Though higher wages

are paid in the neighbourhood they cannot be taken into consideration. Nothing has been allowed for manure as a by-product of raiyats' own cattle. Generally farmers here do not purchase manures. Re. 1 has been taken as the hire of a plough.

	Rs.	A.	P.
1st ploughing (4 ploughs)	4	0	0
2nd ploughing (2 ploughs)	2	0	0
16 seers seed @ Rs. 5 per md.	2	0	0
Sowing and Hoeing (8 men)	3	0	0
Harvesting and carrying (4 men)	1	8	0
TOTAL Rs.	12	8	0
Price of 6 mds. @ Rs. 4-8 Rs.	27	0	0
Profit Rs.	14	8	0
Rent for 1 acre Sukha field.	0	14	0
Per acre net profit Rs.	13	10	0

Now-a-days cultivators grow *kodo* or *marua* of the plains also on the same land without an injurious effect as regards the next crop of maize. Besides, other pulses can be grown with advantage. If maize is followed by *kodo* the total profit per acre in dry unterraced fields will be as follows :—

Maize followed by Kodo or Marua of the Plains.

	Rs.	As.	P.
Out-turn of maize 6 mds. per acre @ Rs. 4-8 ...	27	0	0
Total expenditure on 1 acre ...	12	8	0
Profit per acre ...	14	8	0
Marua in the same land :—			
Out-turn per acre 6 mds. @ Rs. 4 ...	24	0	0
Total expenditure per acre which is higher than maize cultivation ...	20	0	0
Profit per acre ...	4	0	0
Total Profit	18	8	0
Deduct Rent	0	14	0
	17	10	0

The total profit (net) per acre in dry unterraced fields, therefore, after deducting the rent for the year, will be about Rs. 17-10 only on the average field.

Cost of Cultivation of Paddy.

In considering the cost of cultivation of paddy I have left out of account the cost of construction of rice-terraces. I take it for granted that all ploughs are used on hire @ Re. 1-8 per diem. The expenses might be calculated as follows :—

		Rs.	A.	P.
Seed-bed ploughing (1 plough)	...	1	8	0
Preparing *ails*	...	0	6	0
Seed sowing (25 srs.)	...	2	0	0
Total	...	3	14	0
Land :				
1st ploughing (3 ploughs) ...	...	4	8	0
Cutting *ails* (6 men)	...	2	4	0
2nd ploughing (2 ploughs) ...	...	3	0	0
Building *ails* (4 men) @ 10 as. each	...	2	8	0
Transplanting (4 women) @ 6 as. each	...	1	8	0
3rd ploughing (2 ploughs)	...	3	0	0
Weeding (10 men and women)	...	3	12	0
Cutting (5 men)	...	1	14	0
Thrashing, etc. (15 men) ...	...	5	10	0
TOTAL	...	28	0	0
Seed-bed	...	3	14	0
TOTAL	...	31	14	0

Levelling, which can be done both by bullocks and by hand, cost a few annas more. The total cost of cultivation will be approximately Rs. 32 per acre.

		Rs.	A.	P.
Outturn of paddy: 20 mds. per acre @ Rs. 3-8	...	70	0	0
Straw, 5 mds. per acre @ Rs. 12	...	3	12	0
		73	12	0
Expenditure of cultivation per acre	...	32	0	0
Rent of one acre of terraced field	...	1	0	0
The profit per acre	...	40	12	0

Wheat is grown only by the Lepchas and Bhutias. The field is prepared in November by burning the weeds. The land is then ploughed and the clods broken up. After this, the seed is sown. No weeding is done as a rule. The crop is reaped in March and April. The ears are cut off with a sickle, or else with two pieces of bamboo used as scissors. It is thrashed by being beaten with sticks and winnowed by letting it fall from a bamboo-made tray so that the wind carries away the chaff. The grain is soaked in water during one night, after which it is ground and eaten with tea. Wheat when sold brings in a profit of Rs. 15 per acre, but it is mostly grown for home consumption.

Sugarcane is grown occasionally on small plots round the homestead. Barley is sown and reaped at the same time as wheat and is used by the Lepchas and Bhutias only, who eat it with their tea. Mustard which is grown and used by the Nepalis only, is sown in September or October, and reaped in January or February. Buck-wheat, of which there are two principal kinds, the sweet and the bitter, is grown by all, sometimes during the summer and sometimes as a cold-weather crop.

Excepting some, nearly all the villagers have each a plough and a pair of bullocks for agricultural purposes. Those who do not possess bring the bullocks of others on making some payment in kind known by the name of *Arghas*. The cost of hiring of a plough per diem is generally Re. 1 or Re. 1-8.

The Bhutias, Lepchas or Nepali women during leisure hours weave coarse kinds of cloths. They weave while squatting on the ground. The web passes round three rollers of wood forming a triangle, one of these is attached by a leather belt to the woman, another supported on the posts in front of her, and the third pinned to the ground farther off. The woman, by her position, keeps the web stretched to the necessary tightness. The shuttle is a small hollow bamboo containing a roller for smooth movement; this she passes through the inclined web before her, working upwards and passing the woven part round below, until the completion of the piece brings the whole round again. When done, she shuts up her work and the loom disappears. At first, it was done with indigenous cotton grown in the valley near by, but now they are prepared from imported yarn. They use Tibetan wool in preparing such cloths. The Tibetan woman makes nice blankets and carpets out of these. Nepali women make mufflers and socks. The knitting of wool has increased a great deal of late. Women are seen spinning woollen thread as they walk to and fro along the roads and across the fields, to be woven subsequently into a stocking or shawl or some other useful article of attire. It is said to have been started by some maid-servant first in the service of Europeans. It is fostered to a great extent by the knitting school at Kalimpong. It is, however, a sad thing to learn that weaving industries are slowly pushed out by introduction of cheap and fancy German piece-goods. The villagers during leisure hours engage themselves in making baskets, ploughs, and do some carpentry work. The Shepar (a Nepali Bhutia tribe) prepares attractive articles of agricultural use such as mats, baskets, trays, rope, etc. They also make bamboo roofs, plaiting together the outer and the middle layers of the bamboo for this

purpose. Near Pedong, I found these people whose profession has become basket-making from bamboos. Axes, chisels, hammers, spades and all other instruments required in villages are manufactured by *Kamis* or Nepali blacksmiths. The *Sarkis* or cobbler-caste, *Kamis* or blacksmiths, *Soonnars* (goldsmith-caste), *Danais* or tailor-caste have monopolised their respective occupations. They are looked upon as low castes and members of other castes are not permitted to enter such occupations.

Trade is conducted here by means of markets which assemble on Monday of every week. There is, besides, one bazaar here in the village but the villagers go to other markets too such as Rhenock, 5 miles away, Algorah, 4 miles away and Kagay, 6 miles away. Surrounded on all sides by markets the people can go anywhere to sell their rice, maize or vegetables or buy clothes, salt, kerosene oil, etc. This bazaar is under the Darjeeling Improvement Fund and every villager is required to pay tolls for the articles they bring for sale on market days. The toll varies from 1 pice to Re. 1. The villagers bring only small quantities of village produce for sale in order to buy salt, oil or cloth for consumption. The Marwaris, Beharis, and other traders advance loans to be paid in kind which in many cases form a very nominal price well below the price prevailing in the market. Large quantities of village produce are sold to the mahajans at harvest time in this way.

There is a road running from Kalimpong through Pedong to the border of Sikkim which is under the Public Works Department. The Tibetan mule traffic is conducted through this road. There are, besides, other roads leading to Kagay, Kashyone, Dunsong and other villages, which are maintained by the villagers. Each tenant is bound under his lease to supply 2 days' labour without charge for each adult male or female living on

the land covered by his lease, for the opening and maintenance of such roads. This system has so far worked quite well and the roads are fairly well maintained. In this village the roads are maintained by 724 labourers whose 2 days' labour amounts to 1,448 persons' labour for a day. The labour thus supplied is, in many cases, more than is actually required. There are no rivers and railways here for transport.

Since the campaign of 1888, Pedong had assumed considerable importance, as the victualling base for the advanced post in the Gnatong snows. But for the last 6 or 7 years, it is losing its importance. A commodious Travellers' Bungalow has been recently built by Government. There is a branch Post Office, a Buddhist monastery, a bazaar and market place. Rhenock, being the vicinity of Pedong, deprives it of much of the commercial importance it would otherwise possess; as at Rhenock, two trade-roads branch out, one to Gnatong and the Chumbi valley in Tibet and the other to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim.

No statistics could be gathered as to the number of professional labourers, and persons depending wholly or partly on agriculture. There are practically no professional labourers. Most people live on agriculture by itself, and few live partly on agriculture and partly on trade. The beggars that infest so many towns in India are almost non-existent here. Occasionally a *fakir* comes from the plains or a mendicant from Tibet, though the latter may be showing no signs of poverty. Among the local inhabitants beggars are practically unknown. Anybody who is in real distress can find ample work in road-making or cultivation.

There are, practically speaking, no professional labourers. Every neighbour helps every other with men and no one has the necessity of any professional labourers

in fields. The usual prevailing rate of wages in villages is 6 annas for men or women. The field work is carried on by village co-operation. The work of barbers is done here in the bazaar by some Beharis who get 1 as. 6 p. or 2 as per head. The villagers take advantage of utilising the service of these Behari barbers when they come on market days. Still in some villages, specially in old households, one member of the family will usually shave the others. They wash clothes themselves ; in the bazaar only is there a washerman who washes the clothes of the bazaar people at the rate of Rs. 4 for 100 clothes. I could not find any one who lives outside the village for a large part of the year earning his living in profession such as service, except students going to Calcutta or other High Schools.

There are 4 local teachers, a Eurasian and a Behari teacher here in the local Roman Catholic Middle English School. There are 2 mistresses in the local Girls' Primary School, who are hill-women.

The villagers lead a simple life except on Dasaharas when they spend lavishly. After their day's labour they sit down to make baskets, do small carpentry work, look after their cattle or maintain the garden which is attached to the house.

When agricultural conditions are normal people go about in off seasons for trade in sheep, ponies, etc., towards Tibet. Some employ themselves in forests for sawing timber and cutting firewood. A number of Bhutias or Nepalis go to and fro between Kalimpong and the Chumbi valley in Tibet carrying wool and the other articles of trade.

In the hills the means of earning a livelihood is comparatively easier than in the plains, and it is difficult to conceive of the possibility of any trying times such as famine. One warning of famine in the hills would be the

failure of the winter rice crop, on which together with Indian corn and imported rice, the people chiefly depend. Even in the event of a general famine in Bengal this part, especially the hill-people, would not suffer much. They would migrate to where they can obtain edible roots, if they could not get better food. The forests provide ample food for those who can make use of them. The Lepchas partake of more than 100 kinds of fruits, fungi, etc., obtainable in the forests. The Nepalis and Bhutias are a long way behind them in this respect. But in times of scarcity, as in the forests, and even in ordinary years, the Lepchas eat them freely from choice and not of necessity. A Lepcha will never starve in the forest.

There is no tendency among young men to emigrate to towns, due partly to ignorance and partly to love of home. But when education will increase, I believe young people will leave villages for towns, for they will find the village life dull.

The current market price of rice is Rs. 10 per maund and maize sells at Rs. 4 per maund and *Kodo* or *Marua* at Rs. 3 per maund.

There are only 21 families which make savings, according to the report of the Pedong Central Co-operative Bank and there are 95 members who have bank accounts. In the village except 3 or 4 families all are in debt either to the Co-operative Bank or the outside Mahajans or both. The causes of indebtedness are marriage, death ceremony and failure in trade, if any, carried on by villagers during such seasons, and they run into debt especially during Durga Puja when every house requires new clothes and garments and it is at this time that the cultivators blindfoldly get into debt. They think that under all circumstances they must enjoy the Durga Puja in

new clothes. The people spend much in alcoholic drinks such as country spirit and *Marua*. Besides, the price of land has risen and those who borrow to invest in lands do not find the land paying and will not be able to pay the debts unless they will do some other work to supplement their income. I find that those villagers, especially the Brahmins, who abstain from such alcoholic drinks are multiplying daily and the greater portions of cultivated lands falling in such hands. The hill people spend not only in alcoholic drinks and food but also in dress, as they live in a colder climate. It is a pitiful sight to see villagers spending lavishly in fancy dresses during Dashara time. As a consequence of the rise in the price of land the cultivators are enabled to borrow more and as the land is not relatively an equally paying one they run into debt.

Besides the Marwaris and the up-country people in the bazaar, I found 4 villagers in villages engaged in money lending business. The rate of interest is quite high and is very often up to 36 per cent. per annum. Loans to cultivators usually take the form of an advance of grain also, the lender having a tacit lien upon the crop. The advance is repaid in kind at harvest time with an addition of half or double the amount lent. From 7 to 10 per cent. per annum is considered a fair return for the money expended in the purchase of land. Some traders even advance goods to be repaid in produce and thus the produce is disposed of at excessively low rates on the same system.

There is the Pedong Central Co-operative Bank here with its 19 affiliated rural societies and a working capital of a lakh of rupees.

In this block there are three Rural Co-operative Societies namely the Pedong Nepali Society, the Pedong Bhutia Society and the Dalep Society. The Pedong

Nepali Society has a working capital of Rs. 8,895 and 26 members here. The Pedong Bhutia Society works with a capital of Rs. 12,754 and there are 33 members. The Dalep Society with its 36 members has a working capital of Rs. 5,653. These Societies are all on share basis at the rate of Rs. 5 from each member annually and are unlimited-liability societies. There are 95 members in all at present. Loans are issued only to the members of the Societies who pay an entrance fee of 8 annas. The entrance fees are deposited in the Societies and go towards the Reserve Fund of the Society. Each member taking a loan furnishes two or sometimes three other members as sureties. The rate of interest on fixed deposits is $9\frac{3}{8}$ per cent. per annum. There is a deposit of Rs. 6,943 in these three Societies. The class most likely to be benefited are the villagers who are not hopelessly insolvent. The market rate of interest is very high and the Societies by fixing the rate of interest at $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum has conferred a great benefit on the people. The members are to pay the advances in 4 instalments fixed in accordance with the relative productivity of his sources of income. Loans advanced for cultivation are payable within a year. The Bank by introducing a Panchayat system has done great good. Rev. Fr. Jules Dounel, a Roman Catholic Missionary, is the organiser of the Bank. The Panchas settle the amounts of members who are in debt to outside Mahajans. Many outside Mahajans charge a high rate of interest and the Panchas settle the amount at a reasonable rate of interest. The societies are trying to organise a cardamom-sale society to prevent middlemen from taking any share of the profit. This year the Bank had to file a suit against only one member for recovery of debts. The bank gives every facility and opportunity to its members to pay in *kists*. The Bank has become a strong support of the villagers as the outside Mahajans

cannot easily attach their lands if they are members of any society.

The non-productive expenditure of villagers generally occur at the time of ceremonies, in connection with marriage, funerals and the Durga Puja. During funeral ceremonies the Bhutias specially have to spend large sums of money in going through religious rites for the deceased. During illness, these people spend more on sorcery than on medicine. During the Durga Puja, the Nepalis spend lavishly in fancy clothes. Of course, they must wear clothes, not fancy but cheap and lasting ones.

There are no income-tax and *chowkidari* taxes prevalent here and none has yet taken the benefit of life insurance policies.

Education.

The education of the place is at present in the hands of the Roman Catholic Mission. There is a Middle English School under Rev. Father Jules Dounel who receives a monthly Government grant of Rs. 70 per month ; and also a Lower Primary Night School with a Government grant of Rs. 5 per month and an Upper Primary Girls' School with a monthly grant of Rs. 30. There are 125 pupils ; 103 boys and 22 girls.

The percentage of adults able to read and write vernacular may be taken as 40 per cent. There are no highly educated men except the Missionary Fathers Rev. Father Jules Dounel and Rev. Father L. Durel with their headquarters at Pedong. There are two students studying in the Colleges at Calcutta and a few students in the Darjeeling Government High School.

The headman of each block receives from the Government 10 per cent. as commission on the land revenue collected by him. There is one assistant under him

to help him in his accounts. The headman, called *mandal,* is illiterate but he is an influential Bhutia gentleman. This headman usually takes the lead in arbitration proceedings, concerning the disputes in his block, but in matters connected with caste, inheritance, etc., members of the caste concerned are selected as arbitrators. Noteworthy crimes are rarely reported here. There are boundary disputes and irrigation disputes but these are generally settled by the village headman. People do not fall in debt as a consequence of litigation. People are not so quarrelsome and in dire cases only they go up to the court.

The village seems to have become better inasmuch as the population has increased and the conditions of the people have improved by co-operative agricultural banks. The increased number of pucca houses in villages is a sure sign of the increasing prosperity of the people. With the increase of population the standard of living among the masses has also become higher. But in spite of all apparent signs of improvement I find the people to be much more in debt. The price of land has increased without any increase in the relative productivity of land, although there has been an increase in the price of produce. Money invested in land fetches only 6 or 10 per cent. as interest. So if villagers buy lands with borrowed capital it is difficult to conceive of his paying the debt from the out-turn of the land unless he carries on some occupation other than cultivation of the land.

There are very few villagers who can buy land with their own capital. Besides, the increase in the value of land has increased the worth of villagers in the eyes of money-lenders and borrowing has become easier and ultimately the indebtedness of the peasant has become economically excessive. At first, there were very few Mahajans; the villagers lent to one another and avoided debts as the

lands had no market value. The Government is, however, safeguarding the interest of the poor cultivators. Among the cultivators large holdings are prevented, for if a rich man purchases much land from his neighbours he has to call in outsiders to help in the cultivation, and the latter can before many years acquire his occupancy-right, by which the purchaser loses his interest in the land. No persons other than hill-men can purchase lands.

The local business was formerly stimulated by presence of Tibetan traders during the season from November to May, and the mule manure enriched the fields in the vicinity of Pedong. But now the development of Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim, has greatly slackened the business here. The bazaar is not improving due to want of mule camping ground near the bazaar. The mule-owners live in the houses of villagers by the road-side and the owner supplies their wants. A mule camping ground is essential here. Pedong is losing her importance as Algora Bazaar is 4 miles away from Pedong. The village has very few acres of common pasturage. Some land might be taken for this purpose from the reserved forests. The villagers should be provided with good seeds. There is shortage of water. If the water from Dumoong be brought, the people could get sufficient water for drinking and irrigation purposes.

The chief obstacle to the improvement of agriculture is the scarcity of manure. The chief supplies are derived from the dung of farm animals and household waste. The urine of farm animals, which weight for weight, is as valuable as a fertilizer as dung, is in most parts of the village entirely wasted, while the dung is burnt as fuel. So at the present moment the better conservation of manure is agriculturally the most important need of the village.

HUTMURA (PARGANA CHHARA, P. S. PURULIA) MANBHUM DISTRICT (Hd. Qrs. PURULIA)

By

SANTOSH KUMAR UPADHYAY—THIRD-YEAR.

Preliminary (Introduction).

Physical Description.—The village of Hutmura where I saw the light of the day lies in the vicinity of Purulia, the headquarters and the civil station of the district. It is to the north of the railway line passing from Calcutta to Ranchi, about equidistant from the two railway stations of Purulia and Kustaur on the Bengal Nagpur Railway. The neighbourhood of the village is covered with thick undergrowth. No big rivers ; only a small rivulet dried up in summer and furious in the rainy season because of its mountainous origin, glides its course about a furlong's distance from the outskirts of the village. The soil consists of black loam and here and there, specially on waste stretches, solid rocks are to be found. The river is of no use to the village as it fails in the vital task of irrigation. The rainfall is disappointing, so much so that when Bengal and other provinces are reported to be menaced by floods, our village, or more especially the Chota Nagpur plateau, warms itself by unclouded sunshine. The soil is generally rocky on the side of the river. As we proceed further away it is better, but the soil is generally unfertile. The village is situated on an upland but there are no mountain ranges in the neighbourhood.

Population.

The present population of the village does not represent the size it originally supported. A large number of homesteads remaining unoccupied bear eloquent testimony to its comparative depopulation. On enquiry, I was told that it was caused more by a deterioration among the upper classes than in the lower order who are economically more secure. Regarding the general depopulation of the village, the following may be cited as some of the more reliable explanations that were offered to me :—(*a*) The census figures are not entirely reliable ; as regards the aboriginals like the Bhils, Kols, Santals, Bouries and others in our village, they are naturally unwilling to give the facts about the numerical strength of their families. This tendency of theirs may be explained by their apprehension for Government Officials who irrespective of their status appear to them as policemen. This is the experience with the people who took the census in 1911. (*b*) Another explanation is the dual prevalence of cholera and small-pox simultaneously every year in the village. It means a considerable drain upon population. It appears that eight years ago cholera was so very virulent in the village that it took a toll of nearly 50 victims every day. (*c*) The most plausible and satisfactory explanation lies in the fact of emigration to Thara and Dhanbad coal mines, Jamshedpur Iron Works and Burnpur Steel Corporation. A most conservative estimate puts it that not less than 50 to 70 persons form the annual exodus from the village. The main causes of emigration are the spirit of adventure, economic pressure, growing discontent, pauperism and the lure of better material prospects outside. Emigration from the village to foreign parts has been fairly established. Having once returned, they do not entertain the idea of going back. Their movement

from this village to other parts seems to produce no effect on their economic, intellectual and social life except for the fact that they get contented with their lot. This emigration once started catches fire. The husband has to part from his sons, wife and friends for a long time. He does not even become intellectually advanced and his earnings are spent on drink.

The system of marriage exerts a profound influence upon the population problem. The custom of marriage before puberty is existent in all the orders. Child-marriage is advocated in all the communities. Though at present it is falling into disuse yet it is in vogue here. The Brahmans of a dignified order marry their sons at the age of 15 and daughters at the age of 9. Though this evil practice has culminated in a gradual increase in the numerical strength of child-widows and consequent depopulation in the community, yet it is frequently met with. In the orthodox estimation it is a sacrilege to marry their daughters at an advanced age. The time-honoured practice of early marriage is in full swing here. One of the baneful effects of this early marriage in our community has been the birth of sickly and undeveloped children playing a prominent part in increasing the quota of infant mortality. Besides these, owing to the excess of child-widows many families are becoming extinct. Fortunately for the village all these disastrous effects have now served to be the eye-opener of the orthodox community and western culture has brought in a change in their angle of vision. The time is fast approaching when modern ideas about marriage will begin to influence our community. The *Purdah* system is observed by almost all classes of women. They cannot see men ; whenever they come out, they are in charge of a boy and are veiled to escape public gaze.

Among the Bowris and Ajuaan of the lowest strata the system of marriage is quite different. They follow a

different system of inheritance through females. The result of this system is that the female is at full liberty to choose or to divorce husbands as she likes. The man also has the same liberty. The real marriage is binding so long as the husband and the wife are willing to keep up the marriage tie. Divorce can be had at any time by a mere word. The woman can marry again. The death of the man does not make the woman a widow for the rest of her life. With regard to all other Hindus, marriage before puberty prevails. But among the lower classes widow-marriage is prevalent. A brother can marry his widowed sister-in-law. Divorce is obtained in serious cases of infidelity.

A rigid type of communal life is the main feature of the village. Every section of the village lives in a kind of trust or combine. The Brahmins have their own federation on the basis of old village republics for mutual safety and convenience. They elect their office-bearers and every family is represented by its head. They select a village priest to look after the temples and the observance of general religious festivals. Similarly, the lower classes have also organized themselves to protect their interests. Below are given the necessary statistics :—

TABLE No. 1.

	Population.		Statistics.		
Census Year	Number of houses.	Total population.	Hindus.	Mahomedans.	Remark.
1881	80	480	320	160	*Decrease in population owing to emigration as stated before
1891	125	875	620	255	
1901	381	3,048 *	1,975	2,073	
1911	371	2,497 *	1,254	1,243	

My own Census.

Census Year	Number of houses.	Total population.	Hindus.	Mahomedans.	REMARK.
1928	369	2,458	1,312	1,146	Emigration to coal areas explains depopulation.

(With acknowledgments to the President of the Panchayet)

TABLE No. 2.

Statistics showing Births and Deaths.

(With acknowledgments to the Head Master, M. E. School)

Year—
1928-29
(Normal year).

Probable causes :—

(1) Cholera.
(2) Small-pox.
(3) Skin disease.

Births.

	Male.	Female.	Total.
Hindus	29	37	66
Mahomedans	7	5	12
Total	36	42	78

Deaths.

Below 1 year	... 3	2	5
Between 1 and 5	... 2	1	3
Between 5 and 10	... 3	1	4
Between 15 and 20	... 5	3	8
Between 30 and 45	... 4	0	4
Between 45 and 60	... 3	1	4
Over 60	... 2	1	3
Total	22	9	31

General Sanitation of the Village.

From the sanitary point of view Hutmura is fortunate in that it has not fallen a victim to Malaria which is sucking the life-blood of Bengal. Malaria and its attendants have no access to our village. The mass of the people are not emaciated in physique and the village on the whole is healthy. It is situated on an elevation and as such it is not damp or marshy. The village is not under the sway of any disease and such as are noticed are generally imported from outside. Two or three decades ago the people delighted in having an isolated existence but placed within easy reach of railway facilities. Now they have developed the spirit and desire for going to other places to study the habits and manners of other people. More often they proceed on pilgrimage to satisfy their religious craving. As travel increases diseases alien to the village are also brought into the village.

But epidemics such as small-pox and cholera carried away large numbers every year but it is a matter of great satisfaction that this annual drain on population has probably abated for good. In spite of its healthy atmosphere, skin diseases such as leprosy are common in this part.

Insanitary Habits.—The habits of the villagers are not very sanitary. In most houses the cattle-shed and poultry are not kept apart from the quarters of the people. The streets are not as well watered and cleared as they ought to be. There are lanes and by-paths where nuisance is committed. Barring all these the village is fairly clean. There is no drainage problem as such. Nor have they any difficulty with regard to the nightsoil for the simple reason that men resort to the fields or neighbouring plains where pigs act as scavengers. The houses of the Brahmins are clean and tidy. They are regularly plastered with cowdung and

water, a process which the villagers think to be very sanitary.

Medical Help.—Medical assistance is not as well-provided as in Bengal. All ailments are treated by native doctors. The indigenous system is considered specially adapted to the constitution of the villagers. In the cases of snake-bites it is found most effective. The poison is usually got rid of by the muttering of charms. Of late, the District Board authorities have provided a well equipped dispensary with an M.B. as the Medical Officer for the treatment of the local diseases and for stimulating the habit of clean living. But the people generally look to their *Ojhas* for help. But people also seek the hospital in difficult cases without relying solely on the native doctors.

Mosquitoes are comparatively rare and cases of snake-bite are few and far between.

Drinking water.—In spite of the insanitary habits of the people they are decidedly discriminate in the use of drinking water. There are in all 7 tanks in the village of which three are full throughout the year, the rest get dried up in the summer season. The summer being abnormally hot all these ponds are dried up and the hardships of the people know no bounds. In normal times, however, one particular tank is set apart for drinking purposes. The rest two are utilised for bathing and washing. In the middle of summer people draw up water from the District Board wells, which are three in number and as such they hopelessly fail to cope with the situation. People sometimes repair to the river to fetch water. Although in summer its surface is sandy and vast stretches of sand are visible one has only to dig a cubit deep to reach water. People sometimes draw out pure water in this manner. This water is free from dirt or mud and healthy and sweet. The villagers often bathe

in the river owing to the scarcity of water but as the water is flowing it is not considered insanitary.

The housing arrangement of the village is the same as in other villages. Ninety-five per cent. of the houses are made of stony mud-walls with thatched roofs made of straw. Three per cent. cover houses of corrugated tins and the remaining 2 are pucca buildings. The scarcity of pucca buildings does not necessarily indicate the comparative poverty of the villagers. Those who can easily afford to raise up such structures avoid them from a prejudice that it will not suit them. Houses have little inlets to ensure free ventilation. There are no chimneys. This defective housing has attracted the attention of the District Board which has created a Housing Bureau for teaching the people the proper methods of housing. In spite of defective houses one has to note that the people irrespective of their status are quite content with them.

Below is appended approximate figures of the different kinds of houses in the village :

Total number of houses	...	...	369
Number of Corrugated Tin Houses	...	...	27
Number of Buildings	...	...	8
Number of Thatched Houses	...	...	334
Total		...	369

Figures are strictly mine. (Approximate.)

(With acknowledgments to President, Panchayet.)

Land.

The soil in this tract is not fertile and alluvial like that of Bengal; nor is it too barren to make us starve. The surface is rocky and covered with a hard soil. The proportion of dry land preponderates. The soil

is black though at places it is of the kind of inferior black cotton soil.

Land.

Wet land	325·19	Acres
Dry land	612·29	,,
Land watered by well	62·17	,,
Common waste	330·29	,,
Pastures other than waste-woods and forests	700	,,

(These figures are culled from the village Land Register and corroborated by personal observation.)

The dry lands are sometimes planted with ground-nuts but they are generally used for grazing only, being practically used as a common pasturage though owned by different persons. The land revenue for wet land ranges from Rs. 8 to Rs. 9 per acre, this difference being due to the classification made by the Settlement Department according to the fertility of soil. The number of tanks is small and most of the tanks are private possessions. There is hardly any public tank. One stream flows along the outskirts of the village which during the rainy season gets flooded, but gets dried up in the summer. There are private wells in the garden and sometimes in the field of corn. But they are shallow for the most part. There are forests at a considerable distance but they are of no practical use being under Government supervision.

The selling prices of lands have undergone revolutionary changes. A few decades ago the barrenness and unproductivity of our soil led many of the landowners to sell their lands in exchange for liquid cash. In some cases where the lands were entangled in litigation, the net income of the produce was swallowed up by the cost incurred in litigation. They maintained their families no doubt

but their health failed, cash was exhausted and they felt the need of returning to buy lands at an exorbitant rate or go without them. Moreover the gradual extension of coalfields played a striking rôle in increasing the price of land. Land-owning people thought it worthwhile to retain their plots; and now it has been a craze with the people to keep lands in possession. Ordinarily now an acre of land sells at Rs. 560 though a few years ago it fetched Rs. 350. Moreover waste lands, and adjacent woods are being reclaimed, and new villages are springing up. All these have gone a great deal in increasing the price of land. The local Zemindar is at heart a well-wisher of the people.

He, I am told, is trying his utmost to make adequate arrangements for irrigation so that we are not to be quite at the mercy of the monsoons. Government help and patronage are expected for more wells and tanks. Efforts are even made to make the river useful.

D. *Use of Land.*

Out of a total area of 937·48 acres of land (wet and dry) only about 275 acres are cultivated by the landowners and this is to be explained by the fact that most of the lands belong to the Brahmins. Many landowners and especially the Brahmins find it convenient to lease out their lands to tenants. The percentage of cultivating landowners is decreasing while that of the non-cultivating landowners is increasing.

	Year 1921.	Year 1928.
(*a*) Percentage of cultivating landowners in the village	18·76	17·32
(*b*) Percentage of non-cultivating landowners	21·71	23·29
(*c*) Percentage of cultivating tenants	7·9	10·1

(The figures are from a clerk of the Zemindar.)

The main reason why the landowning classes exhibit this spirit of indifference is due to the fact that many other sources of income have sprung up and as such dependence upon agriculture is not necessarily calculated to be the only source. In the case of dry cultivation the position is better. More than 60 per cent. is utilised by the landowners themselves. Three-fourths of the land is let by the landowners on the share system. One-fourth is let on lease. The tenant has to sow and reap the harvest for the landlord and in return for his work throughout the year he gets a certain fraction of the produce. There are about a dozen of landowners who do not reside in the village. Their lands are managed by their relatives in the village who pay the ryot and the tenant out of the produce. Again there are others too, who, not preferring to cultivate themselves, entrust their lands to tenants who have to put in, at their own cost, the manure, the plough and the oxen and other requirements of cultivation and pay the landlord a fixed and arranged portion of the produce. This is called in our dialect the *Kut Bhag* System. Here the tenant is free from landlord's interference during the period for which the lease is taken. Besides these tenanted and rented lands, there are some called "*Bramhottwar*" lands which are personal grants made in some cases for the performance of certain specified services in religious institutions, and others for services rendered on previous occasions. These are free gifts and are not subject to any specified rent. But this sort or free gift is falling into disuse in as much as people are less charitable now. The average rent per *bigha* is as follows:—

(1) Rs. 5 to Rs. 6.
(2) Rs. 3 to Rs. 4.
(3) Rs. 16 to Rs. 18.

E. *Agriculture.*

As in other parts of India, agriculture is the main occupation in Hutmura. Though now a good many avenues of employment have cropped up still agriculture holds its sway. Agriculture, in fact, is the sole industry of the village. Out of a total area of 937·48 acres of cultivable land 492·87 acres yield a single crop per annum, 429·15 acres yield two crops per year and the rest, *i.e.*, 140·46 acres irrigated by the tanks, yield three crops yearly. The principal crops raised may be enumerated as follows, through their respective areas could not be ascertained.

(1) Paddy.
(2) Sugarcane
(3) Pulse.
(4) Brinjals.
(5) Plantains.
(6) Oil-seeds.
(7) Bamboos.
(8) Potatoes.

Paddy is the principal crop and it is cultivated in comparatively wet areas. Paddy is grown on all the wet lands. The cultivators also grow to a small extent such grains as gram and peas in the paddy lands. There are different kinds of paddy, such as *Aus*, *Atma* and *Bhadai*, each having different periods of growth and specially suited to particular soil and period. The fields are manured and in some cases slightly ploughed just before the rains in summer. The south-west monsoon usually begins in June and lasts for four months. As soon as the rain comes lands are ploughed and paddy is sown in particular areas. Jute cultivation is rare in our part. This may be the main cause of the absence of malaria and poisonous flies. Below are tabled the statistics of

areas yielding different crops and the principal rotation thereof :—

		Years.
Area yielding one crop	492·87 Acres	1928.
Area yielding two crops	420·15 Acres	"
Area yielding three crops	140·46 Acres	"

(Figures are strictly approximate)

The following is the rotation of the crops :—

1. Three-crop land :— Paddy : June-October. *Alu* : November-December. Oil-seed : April-May.

2. Two-crop land :— *Karai* : June-October. *Patal* : November-May.

A few years ago there was no system of gardening but now to keep up a well-kept garden has been a craze with the people. Of late lac plantation for the manufacture of shellacs has been extensively developed. Lac is prepared from *Kul* and *Palas* trees. Extensive areas are being controlled by the monopolistic associations of Europeans for the plantation of *Kul* and *Palas* trees.

Manure.—Manure is decidedly a potent factor in agriculture and plays an important rôle in enhancing the productivity of the soil. The villages always evince a keen interest so far as proper manuring of land is concerned. The chief manure is cow-dung. Sheep and goats are made to stay at night in the field for the purpose of manure. Nearly all the cow-dung that is available is used as manure except a very small percentage which is reserved for cleaning dwelling places. Cattle urine is allowed in some places to flow into the dung-pit but no systematic attempt is anywhere made to utilise

it. Besides this, ashes and green manure are in common use. Seeds are sown, the land is completely ploughed, the clods are broken and the manure is mixed with it. Salt water is applied as manure in some cases.

Implements.—Implements are agents of production. The villagers have not yet resorted to scientific implements. The ploughs used are primitive and old-fashioned. They are prepared locally by village smiths. The furrowing is done with a flat piece of iron sharpened at one end and attached to a wooden frame in the handle.

There are about 600 ploughs of such type in the village. Besides the ploughs the following may also be mentioned :—

(1) Sickle.
(2) Mortar for husking rice.
(3) Baskets generally made of cane.
(4) Ropes.
(5) Axes for cutting wood.

Live-stock.—Agricultural operations largely depend on the live-stock. But it is a matter of regret that in spite of the importance it is generally rejected, ill-fed and overworked. Below is given an approximate return of the live-stock in the village :

1	Working oxen	... ...	328	
2.	Cows	... ...	207	
3.	Male buffaloes	... ...	39	(With acknowledgment to President Panchayet)
4.	Cow	... ...	101	
5.	Horses[1]	... ...	34	
6.	Goats	... ...	69	(Strictly approximate)
7.	Sheep ...	... ...	59	
8.	Donkeys	... ...	47	

[1] Owned mostly by the money-lending Kabulis.

The usual fodder offered to the cows and buffaloes is straw mixed with oil-cakes, which form their morning diet. During the day when they are milked they are given a preparation of *Kali* and *Kad*. Oxen are used to drag carts and for ploughing the fields. Most of the oxen present an emaciated appearance. The cows are reared with care. The young calf or calf-buffalo is not usually reared with care and is allowed to take care of itself. Cows, oxen and buffaloes are made to stand in stalls. Bunches of straw and the green grasses are used in the rainy season. Rice-dust mixed with water is often administered. The fodder is raised by each cultivator from his fields. The villagers breed the cattle themselves. But in abnormal times they repair to a distant cattle fair. Most of the cultivators plough the fields with their own pair of bullocks and plough-shares. Borrowing of other's oxen and implements is rare.

The general condition of the live-stock is very pitiable. They fall easy preys to various kinds of ailments. Hoof disease is the commonest and in most cases becomes dangerous. Kerosene mixed with lamp-black is the popular remedy. There is another disease which produces a sort of suffocation. A cholera-like disease accompanied by bleeding is sometimes met with. Snake-poisoning is another, a bite on the nose being supposed to be fatal. Cattle epidemic is of frequent occurrence, so much so that last year the whole stock was affected. This dire calamity has attracted the notice of the Government who have established a veterinary hospital. There has been a change in the angle of vision and all classes of people, even the Musalmans, are evincing a keen interest in the matter of rearing healthy cattle.

To speak of the cost incurred in cultivating a *bigha* the following figures are interesting. According to my calculation the maximum cost of cultivating an acre of

wet land is Rs. 25. The average produce will sell at Rs. 75. Deducting the expenses of cultivation, and also $\frac{1}{5}$ of the gross produce for vicissitudes of the season in accordance with the method employed by the Settlement Department, the net profit is Rs. 35.

The following figures are obtained from the villagers :—

Cost of cultivating an Acre of Land.

		Rs.	A.	P.
(1)	7 carts of cattle and other dungs	5	7	6
(2)	Green manure	3	0	0
(3)	Expenses of ploughing	3	8	0
(4)	Seed	4	6	0
(5)	Labour for harvest, weeding, etc. ...	7	3	0
(6)	Miscellaneous	1	7	0
	Total (approximate) Rs.	25	0	0

F. Village Industries and Trade.

So far as village trade and industries are concerned the village is not very much progressive. There are twelve families of weavers and carpenters consisting of 41 members—19 men, 12 women and 10 children. They find it difficult to maintain themselves with the earnings of their trade. They use the unimproved handloom. Co-operation among them is sadly wanting. They sell their cloths in the adjoining market of the village and do not care to send them to other parts. They do not spin themselves but buy inferior yarn from the market. Their crafts have existed from time immemorial in this village with hardly any change in their economic position. Their capital consists of primitive tools. The condition of the blacksmith is getting worse on account of the importation of foreign iron goods. The other industries

followed by the people are oil-pressing, sugar-juice-pressing and manufacturing of native umbrellas made of grass. Rope-making is also done on an extensive scale. Most of the people engaged in these industries are whole-timers. They carry on no subsidiary industries. It is their sole source of subsistence. The chief articles consumed are rice, fish and vegetables. The price of the total quantity consumed in the market may be roughly estimated at Rs. 400. The quantity of produce is taken to the market. The road system is not satisfactory. Branch-roads are insufficient in number and those that are in existence are in a very bad condition. The nearest railway station is 3 miles off from the village. The plough and other agricultural implements are made locally. Wood required for agricultural and industrial purposes is purchased in the forests belonging to the Government.

Articles f.r consumption are brought at the weekly market held on Fridays. Mat and basket industry is an indoor industry of women belonging to a lower social scale. The profit according to their estimation is not more than three annas a day. The goldsmiths, the iron-smiths, the carpenters and the stone-masons are whole-time workmen. Butter-milk, *ghee* and butter are made and sold by some families, but this is not a permanent trade. It is dependent on cows giving birth at definite intervals. The volume and the extent of village trade are limited; the wants are few and easily satisfied. A cursory observation convinces us of the fact that trade and industries are gradually decaying. This may be partly due to their want of co-operation, use of primitive hand tools, inability to cope with the machine and the absence of cheap and efficient means of transport. Of late the village headman has started an Economic Enquiry into the conditions of the people and the services of an

expert economist have been requisitioned to devise practical means and to better the economic conditions of the Hutmurans.

H. Economic Conditions in the Village.

Wages for artisans are always paid in money; for agricultural work both in kind and money. The casual labourers always secure their wages in money.

	Rs.	As.	P.
A labourer for a full day's work is paid	0	6	0
A carpenter gets	0	9	0
Boy carpenters	0	4	0

It is very difficult to estimate the number of persons who have saved something. For many people are in debt and yet the savings of the year are utilised for buying more lands instead of paying off debts. I have been able to discover from the register of the Brahmacharya Ashram, Economic Section, only four families who have in all made a saving of Rs. 1,500. This sum they lent to their neighbours. The rate of interest is generally 10% to 12% per annum. Owing to the scarcity of rains and failure of crops people are obliged to borrow money even at this exorbitant rate of interest. To protect the people from such exploitation, people are trying their level best to establish a Co-operative Credit Society here.

One of the principal causes of indebtedness is the failure of crops. The following are some other important causes:

(1) Expenses in marriage which are too costly now.
(2) Expenses incurred in litigation.
(3) Increased agricultural expenses in time of stress.

The families which have made savings are very few in proportion to the population. Savings are hoarded and

as such are not available for industrial enterprise. The proportion of debtors who have liberated themselves from debt may be estimated at one-fourth. As regards a large proportion of small landholders and agricultural workers, the want of diversity of occupations, the rise in the price of commodities, the exorbitant rate of interest and the high cost of education form the causes of the indebtedness of the people.

The following is a rough statement of persons holding different positions in life :

(1) Teachers	17
(2) Pleaders	3
(3) Civil Servants	1
(4) Persons serving in cities	92
(5) Labourers in cities	250
(6) In the employ of Zemindars	14
Total ...	377

Number of families in debt	75
Number of solvent families	5
Total ...	80

I. *Education.*

The number of schools of all description is given below :—

(1) M. E. School	1
(2) L. P. School	1
(3) Girls' School	1
(4) *Tol*	1
Total ...	4

Below is given the number of school-going boys :—

(1) Boys	125
(2) Girls	40
Percentage of adults knowing English	2·7
Percentage of people literate	15·28

The problem of illiteracy is serious and our Zemindar is taking effective measures to cope with it. The establishment of an H. E. School is under contemplation. This ignorance may be attributed to the natural tendency of the villagers that they prefer all other vocations to reading. A small percentage of the people are well-educated but they have deserted the place outright; the tendency towards "Back to the village" has set in recently.

A night school for training poorer people has, of late, been started and it is affiliated to the Brahmacharya Asram. A library is on the way of being started. Marked signs of improvement are visible.

J. Village Administration.

There is the President of the Panchayet here with his usual number of associates at the head of the village administration. The Zemindar is the President of the Arbitration Board. Every family is represented by its head. The organisation breathes a democratic spirit as the voice of the people can easily make itself felt.

K. Outlook.

On the whole, the position of the village is one of economic backwardness owing to the scarcity of rains and the failure of crops. The ryots have been impoverished, their income spent on liquor is increasing and consequently they are obliged to get into the clutches of money-lenders. The tanks are getting silted up, and the *bunds* are decreasing in height. But to our great relief there has been a marked progress to bring about the economic welfare of the people.

APPENDIX

ECONOMIC ENQUIRY

Village Survey

Questionnaire

Introduction.

(1) Physical description of the village and its geographical position and relation to forests, hills, rivers, railways ; mention if any neighbouring river is silted up.

(2) Name of the village and of the District, Sub-Division, Police Station, and the Pargana in which it is situated.

A.—Population.

(1) Total population.

(2) Account of the population by caste, sex and age.

(3) Causes of changes in population.

(4) Number of families in the village.

(5) Number of children in the families :

(*a*) Living.

(*b*) Dead.

(6) Number of homesteads.

(7) Vital statistics during the previous year.

(8) Age of marriage for boys and girls in various communities.

(9) Localisation of caste.

(10) The extent of communal tension, if any.

Notes.—(*a*) The age to distinguish between children and others should be 15 years.

(*b*) State your conclusions from the figures whether the population is increasing or decreasing and if so which section of the people (caste and sex) show the increase or decrease.

B.—Sanitary Condition of the Village.

(1) Prevalence of Malaria, Cholera, Tuberculosis, Smallpox, Kala-azar, and other diseases.

(2) Medical assistance available.

(3) Insanitary habits, conditions of living of a particular sect or caste, if any.

(4) Nature and quality of water supply for drinking and domestic purposes.

(5) Do the villagers bathe and wash clothes in the same stream or tank as that used for drinking purposes?

(6) Drainage in the village if any; filthy stagnant pools; prevalence of mosquitoes and snake-bites.

(7) Housing conditions in general, buildings, corrugated iron houses and thatched houses—their numbers.

C.—Land—Agricultural and non-agricultural.

(1) Area of land cultivated.

(2) Fallow land, its area (not jungly).

(3) Area of jungles and of gardens.

(4) Number of tanks and wells used as sources of water supply for agricultural purposes.

(5) Irrigation works if any.

(6) Any improvement effected by the Zem indar.

(7) Selling prices of land.

(8) Area of average holding.

D.—Use of Land.

(1) Number of land-owners cultivating land themselves.

(2) Number of non-cultivating land-owners.

(3) Number of tenants who own lands.

(4) Agricultural workers who neither own nor cultivate lands on "Barga."

(5) Average Rent per "Bigha" per year.

(6) Details of "Barga System."

E.—Agriculture.

(1) Principal crops of the village and their prices, specially of Jute and Rice.

(2) Area yielding one crop per annum.

(3) Area yielding two crops per annum.

(4) Area yielding three crops per annum.

(5) Agricultural implements used.

(6) Stock—Oxen, Buffaloes—their general condition.

(7) What is the usual fodder for cattle? Was there, and is there, any common pasturage? The conditions of the cattle in winter and rainy seasons.

(8) Do the villagers breed their own cattle or purchase them? If the former, give a full account of the methods of breeding and rearing up young cattle; if the latter, state how are they procured and at what prices?

(9) Are manures used? If so in what form?

(10) Recent improvements, if any, in cultivation; mention if cultivation is being subsidised by Agricultural and Veterinary Departments.

(11) Cost of cultivation per "Bigha," according to crops.

(12) How many and what p. c. of the cultivators work with their own ploughs or bullocks? What p. c. hire them? Mention the rate of hire.

F.—Village Trade.

(1) Number of small trades in the village.

(2) Sale of village produce, how effected.

(3) Means of transport—roads, rivers, railways; is the village near a commercial centre?

H.—General Economic Conditions of Villages.

(1) Prepare a statement showing the number of persons and families who depend on agriculture for their livelihood and classify as follows:—

(*a*) Wholly dependant.

(*b*) Partly dependant—mention subsidiary occupations.

(2) Number of persons and families whose chief means of livelihood is Cottage Industry.

(3) Number of persons who do not follow any productive calling but live on charity, begging, etc.

(4) Number of labourers:—

(*a*) Field labourers—their wages (in money or in kind).

(*b*) Other labourers—*e.g.*, barbers, washermen, etc., their wages.

(5) Number of persons who live outside the village for a large part of the year and who earn their living in profession such as service.

(6) Number of :—

(*a*) Teachers.

(*b*) Pleaders.

(*c*) Civil Servants.

(*d*) Persons serving as employees in cities.

(*e*) Persons in the employ of zemindars, mahajans and traders.

(7) How does a cultivator employ himself in hours not spent in work connected with the cultivation of the land?

(8) How does a cultivator employ himself in slack seasons?

(*a*) When agricultural conditions are normal.

(*b*) When they are abnormal: Does he follow any subsidiary calling?

(9) Is there any tendency in the young men to emigrate to the towns? If so, in what capacity?

(10) Current prices of staple foods.

(11) Number of families which make savings and number of people who have bank accounts.

(12) Number of families in debt.

(13) Causes of indebtedness.

(14) Number of mahajans in the village.

(15) Rate of interest prevailing.

(16) A full description of Co-operative Credit Societies, if any.

(17) Non-productive expenditure of villagers.

(18) Number and p. c. of people paying Income and Chowkidari Taxes.

(19) Principles of Assessment in Chowkidari Taxes.

I.—Education.

(1) Number of schools of all descriptions.

(2) Number of school-going boys and girls.

(3) Percentage of adults able to read and write vernacular.

(4) Percentage of adults able to read and write English.

(5) Number of highly educated men.

(6) Have boys passing through Secondary Schools obtained satisfactory career later on? Give numbers.

(7) Have any boys who have received a good education settled in their own village?

If so, how do they use their education?

(8) Mention if there is a library or any association in the village.

J.—Village Administration.

(1) Union Boards or Panchayet System.

(2) Work done by the Union Board for the last five years.

(3) Crimes in the village.

(4) Number of villagers engaged in litigation.

Is anybody in debt in consequence of litigation?

(5) Are disputes settled by arbitration outside the Court?

K.—Outlook.

(1) What evidence is there to show either economic slump or economic improvement in the past?

(2) What opportunities do the village seem to have for economic improvement? Note specially the possibility of improving village agriculture.

General Suggestions.

Detailed account of the income and expenditure of typical families will be extremely welcome. Any information which appears to be interesting and significant, not asked for in this form, will be specially valued. As for example, information as to the decrease of cultivable lands, reason why people buy land and why they sell it, the emigration from the village to cities and its effect upon the economic, intellectual and social life of the village, what new expenditure or luxury and comfort is becoming customary, what other changes there are in

standard of living; and changes with respect to marriage or religious observances.

It should be noted that wherever possible statements must be supported by statistics.

GLOSSARY

Adhiar— One who undertakes to cultivate lands under a system of *Barga* (*q. v.*).

Ails— Narrow boundary lines between fields.

Akhra— Club-house; school of gymnastics.

Alu— Potato; *Solanum tuberosum.*

Aman-Dhan— Winter-rice.

Barga— The system by which the cultivator undertakes to cultivate the land of another person on condition of delivering a share of the produce to that person.

Barwari Festivals—Festivals of which the expenses are defrayed from funds contributed by the public, and which are performed for public benefit.

Bidis— Indigenous cigarettes—a roll of dried leaves of certain trees with tobacco mixture inside.

Bigha— A standard of measurement of land in Bengal; 1 bigha is eighty cubits square; it varies widely, but is generally $\frac{1}{3}$ of an acre.

Bil— A swamp.

Bramhottwar—Property dedicated to a Brahman.

Bund— Embankment.

Chaitra— The last month of the Bengali year; it extends from the middle of March to the middle of April.

Chana— Gram-seed; *Cicer arietinum.*

Chandmarka Pachan— A patent mixture prepared from decoction of indigenous herbs claimed to be a specific against certain types of fever.

Charka— A spinning-wheel.

Char— A sand-bank formed in a river or which has accreted to its bank, sometimes like an islet formed in the bed of a river.

Chokjama— See page 81.

Chowkidar— Village watchman.

Danais – Tailors ; see p. 180.

Dingi— A canoe.

Durba-ghas— Creeping grass ; *Cynodon dactylon.*

Fakir— Properly an Islamic mendicant or a mendicant who has no creed, but ofen loosely used of Hindu mendicants also.

Hals— See page 78.

Harisabha— The place where Hindus sing in praise of their Gods, particularly of Hari.

Hat— Country market held weekly, bi-weekly, or tri-weekly.

Hilsha— A kind of fish abundantly found in Bengal.

Jatra-parties— Itinerant opera-parties.

Jhara-ghas— Grass of which the stems are flat like ribbons; *Cocolaba platyclada.*

Joal— Yoke.

Kamis— Nepali blacksmiths. See page 180.

Kani— A term used in land measurement in some parts of Bengal. It widely varies from locality to locality.

Kanthas— Home-made patched cloths, used as protection from cold.

Kayasthas— One of the three high castes among the Hindus.

Kedar— A local standard of land measurement in the Sylhet District. See p. 78.

Khadi— Coarse cotton cloths hand-woven from hand-spun yarn, popularised by Gandhi.

Khas-mahal— Lands held in Government hands as opposed to those in the hands of private individuals.

Khesari— A species of pulse. *Lathyrus sativus.*

Khurpi— A spud used as a gardening implement to grub up grass.

Kirtans— Music in praise of gods, peculiar to Bengal, sung in concert attended with cymbals and tom-toms.

Kodo— Small-grained cereals of the Millet species; *Paspalum Scrobiculatum.*

Kul— Jujube.

Kutdar— See page 166.

Kutbhag— See page 199.

Langal— Plough.

Lods— See page 168.

Magh— The tenth month of the Bengali year extending from mid-January to mid-February.

Mahajan— A creditor or a money-lender in a village.

Mahisyas— A mixed caste originating from a Vaisya mother and a Kshatriya father—as a rule agriculturists by calling.

Mai— A harrow.

Malakars— People of the gardener caste.

Mandal— A village head-man.

Mantras— Sacred texts.

Marwa— Small-grained cereals of the Millet species; *Eleusine Coracana.*

Mattar— Pea.

Nazar— A due, in excess of usual rents, payable either by a lessee to a lessor or by the tenant to the landlord, on succession or on certain ceremonial occasions.

Ojha— An exorcist or a person who pretends to cure snake-bites by means of charms.

Palas— Brilliant orange-scarlet flowers without fragrance, producing a gum, sometimes used for dyeing; *Butea frondosa.*

Palki-bearers—Palanquin-bearers.

Pan— Betel vine—commonly chewed in India.

Pan— Dowry.

Panikhet— Terraced rice-field.

Para— A part of a village or a ward or a quarter of a small town.

Patal— A kind of vegetable for the kitchen; *Trichosanthes dioica.*

Pathsala— Grammar-school.

Paus— The Bengali winter month extending from mid-December to mid-January.

Palgun— The eleventh month of the Bengali year; February-March.

Pura— A local measure of weight in Sylhet—6½ seers (approx.).

Purdah— A veil or curtain : the practice of keeping women secluded.

Ryots— Farmers: persons having rights in land and directly connected with its cultivation.

Rai— A species of the oil-producing mustard seed.

Sadi (Sari)— Cloths having broad coloured borders worn by Indian women.

Sal— A gigantic timber-tree of great value; *Shorea robusta.*

Sankranti— Last day of every Bengali month.

Sarki— See page 180.
Shalibora— A species of rice, grown on marshy land.
Sital-pati— A fine mat for the hot weather.
Sonnars— Goldsmiths.
Sraddha— Funeral rites of Hindus.
Sravana— Fourth Bengali month : July-August.
Sudha Samudra—A patent fever-mixture.
Sukhakhet— Unterraced rice-field. See page 167.
Til— An oil-seed; *Sesamum indicum*.
Tuni— A kind of timber tree.
Visva Bharati— Poet Tagore's University at Bolepur, Bengal.

INDEX OF NAMES